

EXTREMES MEET

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Vestal Fire
Rogues and Vagabonds
Fairy Gold
Coral
The Altar Steps
The Parson's Progress
The Heavenly Ladder
The Old Men of the Sea
The Vanity Girl
The Passionate Elopement
Carnival
Sinister Street
Guy and Pauline
Sylvia Scarlett
Sylvia and Michael
Poor Relations
Rich Relatives
The Seven Ages of Woman
Santa Claus in Summer

EXTREMES MEET

BY

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AFTERNOON

It was a summer afternoon in the midway of the war. The pavements of that city in South-east Europe might have been actually incandescent, the marble-fronted houses calcined by the sun, and every side-turning an open kiln. The feathery light green foliage of the false-pepper trees that tried to mitigate the monotonous dazzle of the boulevard exhaled a masculine odour, and this was strong enough to make the dark-eyed muffled peasant girls faint with desire when, wearied by the day's marketing, they rested for a while in their pallid shade before they ploughed home through the dust of the long straight roads that radiated from the city across the surrounding plain.

It was so hot that Roger Waterlow broke three of the rules by which his life was ordered in those days. He shook up the driver of a hackney-coach who was frizzling in sleep inside his vehicle. The hood had collapsed. A cluster of flies was sipping at the dribble that oozed from the corner of the man's loose mouth, and from time to time rose heavy-winged when a stronger puff of nidorous breath disturbed them. One of Waterlow's rules was never to engage a hackney-coach when he was carrying any kind of papers, and at that moment in his pocket there

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were half a dozen cypher telegrams he had found waiting for him at the Legation. The driver perceiving through gummy eyes that somebody of importance waited for his services showed his appreciation of the honour by jumping out of the vehicle and jerking up the head of his wretched horse, at the same time catching it a blow under the mouth with his clenched fist. Waterlow swore at him in his own language, and thereby broke a second rule, which was never to let anybody know how fluently he spoke the language of this country. He had sunk down in the corner seat previously occupied by the driver ; but the cushions of that half of the carriage which had been full in the sun scorched his hand, and, recoiling from them just as the driver turned round on the box to ask where he must drive him, Waterlow was taken unaware and gave his correct address. This broke a third rule. Not that it mattered, for the address he had given was one well-known to the local authorities. He had other addresses which he hoped were secret. Still, it was breaking a rule, and it was a sign how much this heat was affecting him, he thought, as the horse set out at a miserable trot along the wide blazing boulevard. There was a reek in his nostrils of sweaty harness ; dusty flames seemed to sweep up from the roadway and sear his face as they jogged on ; the sun striking on the driver's frowzy back, to which the flies clung with a voluptuous flatness, was given off again with an added must of heat. Waterlow removed his smoked spectacles to wipe them and shrank from the splinters of light that assailed his eyes. Why had that fool of a driver ever allowed the hood to fold itself up and make such an oven of his vehicle ? Because he was rotted by the sun like everybody and everything else in

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this sun-rotted city. A great grey-striped fly settled on Waterlow's knee. In spite of his lassitude he struck at it fiercely with his hat. These brutes stung infernally. As iron filings spring back to a magnet the fly darted back time after time to settle on different parts of his clothes, and he got himself into a phrenzy of exasperation by trying repeatedly either to drive it out of the carriage or to kill it. In the end he killed it; but the exertion had made him hotter than ever, and looking at his thigh he saw a dark smear of sweat on the grey flannel trousers, and felt his clammy shirt coiling round him. He wiped his face with a green silk handkerchief. Then he took a letter from his breast-pocket. The thin paper was soggy with perspiration; the spidery writing of the address was blurred.

Lieut. Commander Waterlow, R.N.V.R.

C/o H.B.M.'s Legation.

He pulled the letter from its envelope and read it again. He had only glanced at it when one of the Secretaries gave it to him in the Chancery.

THE NUTSHELL,
WEST LANE, GALTON,
HANTS.

My Darling Boy, I have not heard from you for nearly three weeks now, and I am beginning to feel a little anxious. But I thank God that you are not at sea. I'm afraid this will make you angry. But I cannot help it. I know, dear fellow, that you are fretting to be in a ship, and perhaps if I understood a little more clearly just what you are doing I should be able to sympathize better with your disappointment. But God knows best

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where each of us can do His work best, and if He has called you to a special task in this dreadful war it can only be because He knows where you will be most useful. We do not have enough confidence in His loving mercy. I know how much I have to reproach myself with over that. But I am trying hard now that I am an old woman to learn to trust entirely in Him. You will be glad to hear that I am keeping very well—wonderfully well when you think that I shall be seventy-five in August. It seems only yesterday that I was sitting down to write my first letter to you and addressing it so proudly to Mr R. Waterlow, Cadet, H.M.S. Britannia. Darling boy, I feel that your career has been a great disappointment to you, and I often feel that I was to blame. Father's death when you were a tiny little boy was such a loss to you, and I often think now that I was selfish and considered only the loss to myself. If dear Father had lived he would have known better the right moment to give you good advice. Still, you must not fancy that I am reproaching you. I think that you pulled yourself together in the most wonderful way after that horrible court-martial, and I know what a rough and bitter time you have had for the last fifteen years. I wish for your sake that when the war came you could have had a ship, but I cannot help being glad to think of you safe on land.

There is not much to tell you about life here. We have a new curate—such a splendid preacher—a Mr Wordsworth. He took the place of Mr Shapland, who, as you know, joined the Army. The weather has been fine lately and I have been able to do quite a lot of pottering round my garden in the pleasant June sunshine. The roses will soon be in their glory.

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God bless and keep you safe, my darling boy, I hope I shall have a letter from you soon. You told me to send my letters to the Foreign Office to be sent with the Legation bag. But it all sounded a little complicated and as I have nothing of the least importance to tell you I am posting this letter in the usual way.

My dearest love, and God bless and keep you safe.

Your loving Mother.

Waterlow put the letter into his pocket and leaned back half-oblivious of the heat in a green thought of Hampshire. He was in his boyhood again, following the path by the edge of the wood where the White Admiral butterflies were found, where they used to flutter high up with such a deceptive appearance of weakness. White Admirals ! There had been that sunny morning a year or so before he joined the *Britannia*, when he had said to himself that if he caught a White Admiral it would mean that one day he should be an admiral himself. And he *had* caught one. It had fluttered high out of reach the whole length of the wood and back, and a Fritillary had crossed his path, which might have been a rare one, but he would not take his eyes from the White Admiral lest he should lose it against that huge blue sky and curve of swelling green oaks. And at last the White Admiral had fluttered down upon a bramble spray. It was his, though the thorns tore his net : safe inside the poison-bottle, its wings quivering to death in the sweet sickliness of the cyanide. A good specimen too. A rare butterfly. A White Admiral. Something the chaps at school would hardly believe when he told them about it. But he should not tell them or anybody else that the White

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Admiral, set so well and looking so rare in the cork-lined box, was an omen of his own career. A fine omen it had been. That snake he had kept in spirits of wine had been a better prophet of his future. *Lieutenant Waterlow to be severely reprimanded and dismissed his ship.* And there could have been no other sentence. If only he had known then that this war was coming he might have faced the black mark against him and struggled back into a seamanly reputation. He might have had a ship of his own out here. A sloop probably, or maybe one of those small monitors. He would never have been given anything wonderful after that court-martial. But he would have had lots of other failures to keep him company out in these waters. And they could hardly be called failures. They were good sailors who drank just a little too hard for the Grand Fleet. And that's what *he* would have been. But fifteen years ago the war was not in sight and, thinking he had no chance of promotion, he had chucked up the Navy. He had dreaded long weary years as a soured Number One. "The First Lieutenant's in his cabin, sir. I don't think he wants to be disturbed this watch," says some discreet Marine corporal. "Come on, Number One, we want a fourth!" "Go to hell, blast you. I've got a headache!" He had dreaded the wardroom and the way people would look up curiously over their month-old illustrated papers to see what kind of a mood Number One was in to-night, and the way everybody would take it for granted that he would have another gin and bitters, and the way they would smile and wink at one another when he was holding forth in some trite old naval argument a little indistinctly, a little too didactically, a little boringly, with eyes that blinked

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rather too much and were just faintly glazed. That was no life for anybody, the life of a competent, soured, wrinkling, never perfectly sober First Lieutenant. So he had chucked the Navy, and he could hear now his mother calling from the garden that sloped down to the miniature river at the back of their cottage when he had arrived back from Portsmouth so unexpectedly, "My dear boy isn't this a delightful surprise?" And then she had turned limp and let all her roses fall upon the path. "There's really no need to look so horrified, Mother. As a matter of fact I've got a good job already. A friend of mine knows a Greek shipowner, and I've signed on for his Black Sea fleet. I'll have my own ship sooner than I expected."

And it had not been such a bad life. It was only when war broke out that he had been disappointed. Perhaps if he had never let on at the Admiralty how well he knew this part of the world he might have got a mine-sweeper. "Oh, but you're just the fellow for X," his old friend Downey had told him. Downey was naval adviser to one of the Sea Lords, and yet only a year or two senior to himself. "Who's X?" "Oh, he's one of our hush-hush men. Secret Service." "But I want a ship." And Downey had laughed jollily. "So do I, old man. And between you and me I don't mind telling you that I hope to get," and he had whispered delightedly to Waterlow the name of one of the new super-Dreadnoughts that would soon be in commission. Waterlow had tried to wish him well; but his good intent had lacked fervour, and it was only too evident that Downey, in giving him a letter for the mysterious Captain X, supposed that he had done far more for an old friend than he had any reason to expect.

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He had liked Captain X. Perhaps if he had not liked him so much he would not have accepted this job. He would have stuck to merchant ships, and if he had done that he might perhaps have been given a Q-ship¹ for these waters. A big caique hiding a thirteen-pounder and an English gunner, and a native crew. Such a ship might have caught a submarine napping. A submarine? That was the kind of butterfly to chase when one was over forty. No chance of bagging a submarine now, except indirectly by a lucky bit of information he might get to the Vice-Admiral in time. Not that the V.A. paid the least attention to his information. The V.A. thought that "intelligence" might help the Army at Salonica, but that the idea of its being any use to the Navy was ludicrous. He could hardly be blamed when one remembered the bilge that intelligence bureaux were pumping out all over the world in these hectic days. Still, if he could only put the V.A. in the way of bagging a submarine. But if they never bagged that German fellow who came all the way round by Gibraltar and played old Harry with the Dardanelles show, what chance was there of bagging these Austrians out from Pola with fuel enough for a two months' cruise? Submarines! If the ocular evidence for ghosts were no better than the ocular evidence for submarines out here, fewer people still would believe in ghosts. And yet they did exist. Somewhere at this very moment, within twenty miles perhaps, a submarine might be sitting on the top of the water basking in the sun like a fat duck—a sitting shot. But no amount

¹ Q-ships were disguised merchantmen which, after luring U-boats to attack them, hoisted the White Ensign and showed their teeth.

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of grubbing about with spies on the mainland would give *him* that sitting shot. It had been a mistake to let himself be captivated by the charming mysteriousness of X. Up there in X's little room at the top of Queen Anne's Mansions the job had sounded so important. And he had been so grateful when X had told him that he would have a commission as Lieutenant-Commander in the R.N.V.R. Yes, up in that little room at the top of Queen Anne's Mansions, with London outspread below in the silver haze of a winter's morning, it had seemed marvellously worth while to be going back to the Near East entrusted with the task of building up an organization to obtain intelligence from Turkey in case, just in case, the faint chance that things might be moving in that direction were realized. And things had moved. But now the Dardanelles show was history. The men for whom it had meant so much to work had passed on to other spheres of action. Salonica was not quite the same thing. No, not quite the same thing. Waterlow's grey eyes hardened. There seemed many more pale lines in his deep-tanned face as by the drawing in of his lips the skin was tightened ; and when he snatched off his hat to drive away another of those big flies no on-looker would have noticed with surprise that his brown curls were grizzled. Salonica made him feel his age, and for the moment in this stale sunshine look it. In a happy mood he did not look more than thirty—mellowed by wind and weather perhaps, but hardly touched by time.

The hackney-coach had many minutes ago turned out of the wide boulevard ; and after traversing an endless narrow street it had now reached the outskirts of the city, where, on every side, new houses were being built and

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the skeletons of new streets were traceable. This quarter resembled a dusty wasteground in which the marble-fronted houses rising pretentiously among the mounds of rubbish had the unreality of pavilions in a dismantled exhibition. Pavements ended abruptly in a desert of yellowish dust in which scrawny hens were scavenging ; here and there surviving from what until recently had been a rural district were small cafés, pleasant tumble-down little one-storied buildings with fig-trees and arbours wreathed with vines under which idlers sat for hours over a minute cup of coffee and a small cube of Turkish delight. It was by one of these cafés that the vehicle pulled up, and the driver turned round to ask the exact direction of his fare's house. Waterlow did not repeat the address, but got out of the vehicle and having paid off the driver took a seat outside the café. While he sipped slowly from a cup of sweet thick coffee he eyed steadily the four other occupants of the arbour, each of whom clicked away at his string of fat beads with a too carefully marked independence of his neighbour, a too elaborate nonchalance. In five minutes Waterlow left the café and padded over a series of dusty undulations to an almost similar place about three hundred yards away. Here there were five more idlers whose attitude when he surveyed them over a second cup of coffee had the same strained indifference as the others. After embarrassing them for five minutes he walked quickly up a skeleton street between the two cafés and entered a house standing by itself in a little garden full of round white stones in patterns and small glossy palms. He went upstairs to the flat on the second floor and entered a large room with a big square table in the middle, a couple of safes, and a few chairs of the

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restaurant type. At the table a fat man with a heavy fair moustache was tapping away in his shirt sleeves at a typewriter. Jalousies tempered the glare from without. The whirr of an electric fan on top of one of the safes gave an illusion of coolness and helped to discourage flies.

"Haven't you finished typing out that report yet?" Waterlow asked impatiently.

The fat man held out his hands in a deprecatory emotional gesture that was strangely out of keeping with his superficially stolid appearance.

"Now, please, Commander W, be reasonable," he exclaimed in a pathetic tenor faintly tinged by cockney. "I haven't stopped working on it hardly for a moment. I had my lunch sent in."

"I bet you did," Waterlow jeered. "And you might eat it on your side of the table next time." He took out a handkerchief and flicked away distastefully at the unpolished deal surface as he spoke.

"Didn't Nikko brush away all the crumbs?" exclaimed the fat man, jumping up with alacrity at an excuse to ring the bell and reprove somebody else on his own account, not to mention the chance of a minute or two's rest from the typewriter.

"Never mind about that now, Crowder," snapped his chief. "You seem to forget that the Bag goes out tomorrow."

"No, I didn't, Commander W," said Crowder in a hurt voice. "That's why I'm hurrying so."

"Well, you'd better decode these telegrams now," said Waterlow, handing him four or five flimsy sheets covered with groups of figures.

Crowder beamed. He was not too fond of this task,

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but he preferred it to typing. He went cheerfully to one of the safes, jangling a great bunch of keys importantly before he found the right one. Then he came back to the table and with the help of a small much thumbed dictionary and an eight-inch rule set to work. The cypher was a complicated one, involving besides very accurate measurement of the columns of small print a good deal of arithmetical calculation. Crowder's smooth brow was soon puckered like pink silk.

"Oh, crumbs!" he groaned presently. "I wish those blighters in London had to decode their own telegrams. Spell a word of five letters, and it comes out R-Q-T . . ."

"Don't talk," Waterlow interrupted sharply. "I'm thinking something out."

And then in the way one's thoughts do behave when the sun is blazing down on a gimcrack house where all solidity has been sacrificed to a veneer of white marble, Waterlow could not concentrate upon the problem of those police spies he had recognized in the two cafés, the problem of why, when normally a couple of them was considered enough to supply the Chief of the Secret Police with information about his movements, there should be nine of them at least this afternoon. What did it mean? He thought of several possible explanations, but presently he could think of nothing except the incongruity of Crowder. It was absurd enough that Crowder should in times of peace be a licorice-grower in Asia Minor, but it was even more absurd that war should have turned him into the general factotum of an intelligence bureau. Nobody ever looked more like the occupant of the corner seat of a third-class smoker who would get out at Surbiton. And he had done some good

work—some jolly good work. He was lazy, of course, and like everybody else out here, always ready to take the easiest way out of a situation. Still, he had found some of the best agents they had used, and why shouldn't he have a commission? What right had they in London to pay absolutely no attention to his repeated applications on Crowder's behalf? He was better entitled to a commission than many of those fellows in Queen Anne's Mansions, who would never hear any report more alarming than some of those he had written home. They could swagger across St James's Park in uniform, looking more like park keepers than N.O.'s; but they would have thought twice about landing on the Anatolian shore at night to take off a messenger. Not that Crowder had exactly enjoyed those landings. Still, he had carried through half a dozen, and had come back white and wobbling to Vathy, saying it was the smell of the water-melons and oil in the motor boat which had made him so sick.

At that moment Crowder handed him across the table the first of the telegrams he had decyphered.

"Idiotic questions from Malta, Cairo, and Marseilles," Waterlow commented disdainfully. "You can put Dryden on to all those."

"Right-o, Commander W," said Crowder cheerfully, noting them down.

Some of Waterlow's agents were called after the names of poets. Chaucer, Milton, Dryden, Keats, Shelley, Tennyson—these resounding names concealed the identity of some queer scallywags.

"The next one's from Mudros," said Crowder. "And I think it's a strafe." He measured the column in the

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dictionary again. "The rule makes it 'entirely useful and often inaccurate.' They must mean 'entirely useless,' I'm afraid. Yes, that's what it was," he said, after wrestling with the decoding for another five minutes. "The old boy sounds a bit ratty."

Waterlow read the second telegram :

The information lately received from W has been entirely useless and often inaccurate. The attention of W is drawn to this in the expectation that he will employ more religious agents . . .

"More religious agents ?" he repeated.

"That's what the rule makes it," said Crowder apologetically. "I thought it sounded a bit funny. But they want so many funny things nowadays that . . ."

"Obviously it should read 'reliable,' you ass," Waterlow snapped.

more reliable agents in future. With regard to the statement in the last report from agent Number 29, that Goeben and Breslau were quite undamaged, the Vice-Admiral is satisfied from the reports of his observers that in the last air-raid on Constantinople several direct hits were secured on both ships.

"It's a pity these flying chaps don't have to bring back the coconuts," Waterlow scoffed. "Several direct hits! Perhaps 'yes.' Perhaps 'no.' Well, it's no use arguing with the old boy. And he won't think much of our information until both ships bob out of the Dardanelles one morning and make him late for lunch."

"29's usually pretty reliable, and he was quite clear that neither of the ships was even touched. In fact,

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I thought his report the best we'd had for some time," said Crowder. He spoke like a dealer whose wares had been impugned. He had been summoned from the judicial unimpassioned atmosphere of the counting-house to defend from the abuse of a customer the humble assistant behind the counter.

"No, fat boy, it was lacking in optimism," Waterlow jeered. "A good agent tells you that a lack of coffee and contraceptives among the Turks will make them sue for peace in less than a month. The fighting arms, fat boy, are always thirsting for an intellectual tonic. That is what the secret service is intended to provide. That, and a little mild mental recreation from the stern realities of war. I think I'll send the V.A. that report on conditions in Sofia from Number 33, who stung us for fifty pounds and never stepped outside his own front-door. He was as optimistic as a joke in *Punch*."

"If I ever catch that blighter, Commander W," Crowder declared. "If I catch him, I'll . . . well, I'll . . ." He thumped with clenched fist the flaccid hollow of his pink palm.

"I'm sure you will, Crowder. But you can settle that when you do catch him. Meanwhile, will you kindly direct your energy and your good intentions to that last undecyphered telegram? We've got to be down at Number Ten presently to collect the day's reports. I'll write a letter to the V.A. while you're doing it, and you can type it out to-night when you've finished off the other stuff. You'll want to be free to-morrow morning in case there's anything urgent in the Bag which must be answered before the Messenger leaves again."

Crowder reassured his chief with one of those bland

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gestures that claimed to wash away like a mellifluous soap the minor worries of life, though to himself as he bent over the telegram he allowed the commiseration of a faint sigh. He was thinking how far away bed-time was.

There was silence for awhile in the lazy subdued sunlight of the big square room except for the whirr of the electric fan and the scratching of Waterlow's quill pen, to which at the end of ten minutes was suddenly added the whistling of 'A Life on the Ocean Wave.'

Waterlow without looking up from his letter put out a hand and muttered :

"Give me the 'secret' stamp."

But instead of receiving the rubber stamp which refreshed by a scarlet pad was to decorate his communication with the right air of portentousness he found his hand being clasped and warmly wrung by the pudgy hand of his subordinate.

"God bless you, Commander W," Crowder was gurgling. "It's this telegram, Commander W," he explained in answer to his chief's astonished gaze at his moist eyes and heavy blond moustache dewy with tears. "It's my commission at last."

Then he broke down utterly and sobbed into a bandana handkerchief as big and as bright as a flag.

"Well, you might remember that you look like an Englishman," said Waterlow frowning, "even if you have been growing licorice in the sun all these years."

Such demonstrative emotion always made him angry, because he dreaded his own surrender to it one day under the stress of a climate and scenery that with every year strip something from the Nordic man and send him a

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little nearer back to that Mediterranean culture from which perhaps he originally came.

"Can't help it," Crowder blubbered. "It's the dream of my life come true."

Waterlow read the telegram.

With regard to your application for a commission to be granted to Mr Thomas Crowder I have to inform you that while it is not considered desirable that Mr Crowder should be given a Lieutenant's commission in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, there is no objection to granting him a temporary commission as Assistant-Paymaster, R.N.V.R.

"They might just as well have made you a Lieutenant," he said resentfully.

"Oh, I don't mind a bit about that," Crowder declared. He did not want anything to mar the pleasure of his chief in sharing with him the splendour of the prospect from this pinnacle he had with Waterlow's help attained. "Because, after all," he added, "I'm not a Lieutenant, and I never shall be, not if I live to be a hundred. It's only to have something to put on my visiting cards. Perhaps you'd write out for me just exactly what I ought to put, would you, Commander W, would you?"

"You've no time to run round paying visits. You have a certain amount of work to do, though you like to forget it."

"Oh, I don't want 'em for myself, Commander W. No, no, no! It's for my old dad. He finds Streatham so terribly quiet after Asia Minor, and it might amuse the old man if he could pass round one of my cards. You know; it would show I was in the thick of it, as you might

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say. Oh, and then there's my uniform. It would be a rare treat for Dad if he could occupy himself with that. He'd feel he was doing his bit. I suppose most shops would stock naval outfits in these days? "

Waterlow began to laugh with real enjoyment. Crowder as a naval officer even without the executive curl should provide enough amusement to cheat the sun of its power to rot the mind with melancholy.

"I don't quite see the point of your wasting money on a uniform even to give your father a bus ride up to town. You won't have any chance of wearing it out here."

"Ah, come now, Commander W, that's being a bit pessimistic, that is. We may get 'em in on our side at any moment. Lord knows we're working hard enough, you and me. I reckon if they'd had us at Sofia in October 1915, Bulgaria wouldn't have moved a finger. You remember Jimmy Magrath, that hatchet-faced fellow who had an egg business at Dedeagatch—the fellow who got us Number 16, which was the best agent we ever had? " He broke off to shake his head and click his tongue for a moment or two of regretful reminiscence, then resumed earnestly, "I reckon if he hadn't been shot, we'd have had the Kuleli Burgas bridge by now. What a pity they scuppered him! Well, as I was saying, Jimmy Magrath said to me, 'Crowder, old man,' he said, 'the rottenest egg I ever sold to a drunken sea-cook sailing that night wasn't so rotten as our diplomacy at Sofia.' But coming back to the subject of my uniform, Commander W, what is there to stop me wearing it if I ever went up to Mudros to talk things over about what the Vice-Admiral really does and doesn't want from us? "

"Nothing whatever except myself."

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Crowder sighed.

"Well, I think I'll get the uniform. Because, after all, there it'll be."

"Put away in camphor like mine," Waterlow murmured with a crooked smile. Then he jumped up from the table.

"Come along, Crowder; we can't spend the rest of the afternoon with your schoolboy dreams. Isn't that the car? Here's my letter to the V.A. Get it typed out to-night; don't forget. Shove your decodes in the safe. Hurry up. Get them typed out and filed to-night. Look here, my lad, you'll have to do a little more work and hustle around a bit more sharply now you're a sea-louse."

"A what, Commander W?"

"Didn't you know the R.N.V.R. were called sea-lice out here?"

"Who calls 'em that?" Crowder demanded indignantly.

"The Royal Navy."

The new Assistant-Paymaster looked crestfallen.

"And what do we call *them*, Commander W?"

"Sir, when we're speaking to a superior officer."

The Assistant-Paymaster wrung a fat hand to express his consciousness of the slip.

"I must get that habit. I'll start off with that. And then perhaps you'd give me a few hints about saluting and—well, you know what I mean, Command—sir. If anybody takes up anything they want to do it thoroughly. That's right, isn't it?"

"Quite right. Which I suppose is why you're leaving the telegrams on the table."

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Crowder wrung his hand again in penitence.

"I'm just a bit excited," he explained, folding up the telegrams and putting them in the safe.

The chauffeur, who had recently married a passionate red-haired Italian, did not look much refreshed by the siesta he had been granted that afternoon.

"Didn't you get any sleep, Gunton?" Waterlow asked.

"No, sir; my missus was carrying on about me coming back at four o'clock this morning," said the chauffeur, a shrivelled little cockney with mild pale eyes and a red dyspeptic nose.

"Didn't you explain I'd kept you late on duty?"

"Yes, sir. But when my missus gets jealous she can't follow my English the way anybody would who *was* English. She just throws her head back and screams at the top of her voice very harsh. Well, they say woman was born jealous, don't they, sir? So, I suppose anybody must put up with it who's married one. And, of course, it has been unusually hot to-day. Broiling, as they say. Straight down to Number Ten, sir?"

"Yes, but slow up just a moment by that café at the corner."

The four idlers were still sitting over the same cups of coffee, the same small cubes of Turkish delight.

"What do you make of that concentration?" Waterlow asked his subordinate. "There are five at the other place over there."

From the safety of the car Crowder frowned and glared ferociously at the idlers fumbling with their fat beads.

"Notice how many there are loafing about at the

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corner when we turn round to Number Ten. Drive on, Gunton."

It was six o'clock by now, and through the dazzle was not so needle-sharp, the heat was even more unpleasant. The stored-up staleness of the blistering day met their faces in gusts of warm acrid air, the discomfort of which was intensified rather than diminished by the pace of the car.

"Don't drive so fast, Gunton," Waterlow called out fretfully. "And for heaven's sake, Crowder, don't sit up so much like the Sultan on his way to Santa Sophia. You swell up like a pink balloon the moment you get into a car. You bulge objectionably."

They reached the middle of the city and turned off from the main boulevard beside some public gardens full of metallic palms. Presently they came to the corner of the small street in which Waterlow's other house was situated. It had been the central point of his organization too long for it to have escaped the notice of the local authorities; but the street was conveniently situated, and it was very easy for anybody who was being shadowed to reach the trams running along the boulevard, or at night to trick his pursuers among the mazy paths of the gardens close by. Besides, had he moved now, any new house at all generally frequented would have been compromised at once. It was better policy to give the other side something to watch and aim at secrecy by continually changing the places where he met agents of real importance. Secrecy was a problem in this small capital. It was not London.

As Waterlow had expected, the usual police-spy at the corner had been reinforced by two or three others who

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could not resist showing by their eager looks at the car why they were on duty there.

"I'm sure there's something in the wind," he said to Crowder. "Or else why do we cause all this extra anxiety?"

When they reached the door of Number Ten and Waterlow was going in, Crowder hung back and asked him if he could be spared for a few minutes.

"What for?"

"I just wanted to pop round the corner for a moment," said Crowder, shuffling from one foot to the other and pleading with his eyes like an anxious schoolboy for his excuse to be accepted without further questions. But the master was inexorable.

"Why?"

"Well, I rather wanted to get a shave."

"Your cheeks are as clean as a baby's."

"Ah, but it's my moustache, Commander W."

"What's the matter with your moustache?"

The fat man gave the effect of tittering in his embarrassment.

"Rather a *faux pas* now that I'm a naval officer, eh?"

Waterlow sped him on his way with a cheerful kick, and the fat man beaming with delight rolled off down the street toward a barber's.

Number Ten was an old house which had somehow managed to survive when the rest of the street was built up on modern lines. The houses on either side of it and opposite were all of the usual urban pattern, and it was only their whiteness that would have made them conspicuous amid the uniformity of a London suburb. They were all three storeys high and so exactly alike that the

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one which displayed in a first-floor window a canary in a gilded cage gained by just that distinction a rich individuality of its own. Most of them had big doors, because most of them were divided into two apartments, and the architect seemed to have supposed that a door used by two families ought to be larger than a door used by one. The top panels of these doors were filled with ground glass, the viewless monotony of which symbolized the outlook of those who lived behind them.

Number Ten with double-fronted single storey and large basement, crusty-brown pantiles, yellow-plastered heavy stone walls, and faded blue jalousies gave to the long faces of its stereotyped neighbours an expression of mournful disapproval, as if they could hardly bear this gypsy rebel that refused to come into line. Nor could they impinge upon its independence, for the thickness of the stone walls gave it all the advantage of a detached house; a pistol might have been fired inside without the neighbours next door hearing a sound. To compensate for the lack of height Number Ten stretched back farther and actually owned a little garden where the old housekeeper and her family grew vegetables, and where over the high walls tumbled cascades of Morning Glory, whose myriads of small parachutes so lustrous blue and buoyant at the prime hours of the day were shrunk by noon to clammy membranes of dingy purple. The big room at the back empty except for a few chairs and small deal tables served excellently for Waterlow's town agents to stand by for duty. He had about a dozen of them altogether, whose job was to keep in touch with the gossip at the cafés, to notice the arrival of any unexplained stranger, and to be at hand for urgent enquiries from other

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centres of intelligence about people who by the mere fact of such enquiries being made would automatically become suspects and be chained for the rest of the war to a note of interrogation. These enquiry agents were by this date as familiar to the local secret police as the local secret police were familiar to them. Nevertheless, in the course of the day they contrived to amass a large amount of information, the value of which by this date Waterlow was able to gauge easily enough. When he first came here from London he was confused by a blizzard of extravagant rumours and fantastic inventions. He was snowed under by innumerable scraps of paper, every one of which appeared of equal importance. Experience, however, is the stomach of the mind. It does more than teach. It performs. Within a few months Waterlow was able to judge almost it might seem by the feel of the paper what to absorb and what to reject, and with the passage of time this catalysis worked more and more accurately, more and more mechanically. A prudent man at the end of his life will have decided that most men are liars: a year's experience of the secret service will teach the most imprudent that all men are liars. And that in many moods might be held the beginning and the end of its utility.

Number Ten was the first house that Waterlow had rented, and during the early days of the Bureau he had lived in it himself. Then the bugs woke up from their winter armistice and drove him out to seek his own sleep elsewhere. Number Ten required somebody with a tougher skin than his to withstand the activity of its creeping nocturnal life. He had taken it as a furnished house; but furniture in the Mediterranean does not

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mean what it does elsewhere. In this case it consisted of several bamboo jardinières and tripod tables, six hideously foliated chairs with green plush seats, and three uninhabitable beds. The convenient situation of the house close to the heart of things and yet as self-centred as a fortress had made it the obvious place to choose ; but the feature which had superficially attracted him to it as an appropriate rendezvous for his organization was the way in which some previous occupant had draped the walls of every single room with cretonne hangings of the Tree of Life pattern, and not merely the walls, but the windows and doors as well, so that at night nothing was to be seen round one except that pattern of teeming barbaric life endlessly repeated in blood-red and powder-blue. Such a style of decoration gave even the safes the magic look of a conjuror's apparatus ; and there was no doubt that the effect on a person introduced for the first time to these draped echoless small rooms—there were half a dozen of them opening one into the other—was one of uneasy bewilderment. His stammering narratives seemed to get involved in the complications of the teeming design, and his anxiety over what might be hidden behind the draperies soon destroyed the confidence of the coolest liar. Palmists know this trick for impressing the fancy of their clients and making them susceptible to the abracadabra of their trade. Doctors use morocco leather in the same spirit. Not that Waterlow had anticipated the effect of these draperies. So far as they were concerned the choice of Number Ten had been a happy fluke. He soon realized the value of such a background, however, and he wished that the various really secret corners of the city whence his really secret agents were despatched upon their missions

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could be shrouded as disconcertingly as this. But to keep those corners secret it was necessary to take them as he found them. And anyway death always leering over the shoulders of those really secret agents kept them as much in order as the pattern of the Tree of Life. There were exceptions, of course, like the agent 33, but *he* would have cheated the Father of Lies.

In one of the rooms a large ledger lay upon the table. This was gradually being filled up with numbered questions of every kind. There were already over six hundred, of which half had never been answered and three-quarters of the rest answered inaccurately. The enquiry agents who spent their leisure playing cards and drinking coffee in the big back room were encouraged to compete with one another in the successful solution of these minor problems, two or three of which in the whole of that large book provided clues for more thorough investigations and led to important results. In the corner of this room a distinguished antiquarian called Henderson sat at a desk making a card index of all the places and personal names which had cropped up in any connection with the B or contre-espionage side of the bureau's activities, whether in telegrams of enquiry and information from other centres of Intelligence or in the daily reports of the workaday agents. Waterlow kept the files of the A or espionage side in the safe at the Other House, where they were guarded night and day by Anatolians, in whose fidelity he had perfect confidence, men who had had sisters or daughters carried off by the Turks into the interior, and who were waiting for their revenge.

Henderson was a finely carved delicate creature with a scholar's stoop and a scholar's pallor, such a one as may be

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seen crossing the quadrangle of any Oxford college. He worked for at least ten hours a day and, except in the height of summer, often longer at this card index, which was by now at once a monument to his judiciously sceptical mind and the solid foundation of whatever practical success this branch of the Bureau had achieved. He rarely spoke; but about twice a week, with one arm behind his back holding the other's elbow, he would come on tip-toe into Waterlow's room and relate a long and, owing to the rarity of his teeth, an almost unintelligible story, of which such parts as were distinguishable consisted of elaborate scholastic jokes and allusive pedantries. Then he would wander back to his card index, chuckling softly to himself and swinging his disengaged arm from the elbow. And Waterlow, looking after him, would feel that he ought to have given him a lump of sugar and told poor dear Henderson what a good and clever bird he was. Poor dear Henderson, indeed! These must be bitter years for him, for there could not be many before that delicate creature, and those precious few had to be wasted thus.

This then was the atmosphere, for it was much more an atmosphere than the interior of a house, into which Waterlow plunged from the world of reality toward the end of this summer afternoon in the midway of the war. The front door had been flung back without his knocking by a puckered-up little waif of the Levant who bore the name of one of the great historic families that in the middle ages ruled Naxos and other famous islands. He had been picked up on the roadside one night by Waterlow, where he had lain down to die of starvation. He was completely alone in the world, and the inspiration of his

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life was the hope that one day he would have an opportunity to repay his master by sticking a knife into one of his enemies.

"Well, Stavro ?" Waterlow enquired, as he waited to have the white dust flicked from his boots by a feather brush.

The puckered aged young face smiled, and by that smile it was transformed to the likeness of one of those small subtle faces that live in the corner of an old painter's canvas, those small subtle smiling faces that catch our eyes from the walls of a museum as we walk slowly past and lure us into pausing before the painted drama, of which when regarded more closely these little people seem such cynical spectators in their vivid scarlet hose and jaunty plumes.

"Everything is quite all right, my Capitaine," said the boy.

Waterlow passed on within. The aristocratic subtle smile faded from Stavro's face. It became like an old roughly carved wooden image. The whole of his vitality had gone down into his right hand, which was stroking a knife sheathed in a leather pocket sewn to the inside of his waistcoat. He used to stroke that knife all day as a charmer might stroke a snake or a child a toy.

The first room Waterlow entered was that in which Henderson was working at his card index. They nodded to each other without speaking, and Waterlow turned over the pages of the ledger to see how many recent questions lacked the cancellation in red ink which showed that an attempt, however inadequate, had been made to answer them. He frowned at the scarcity of red ink crosses.

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"A lot of questions unanswered," he grumbled.

"Hot weather," said Henderson in his high indistinct voice, cocking his head on one side and looking up at the ceiling with one eye as a parrot surveys the zenith.

Waterlow nodded and passed on to the back room, where the agents all sprang to their feet and stood to attention.

"I'm ready for the reports from the section chiefs," announced.

One after another the first three entered the room, each one standing by his desk in turn and fidgeting like a nervous schoolgirl who has handed in an essay to her mistress while Waterlow scanned the sheaf of paper that was his day's harvest. Each of them was dismissed with a grunt. The scanty information they had gleaned had no more value than the gossip of a tired dressmaker.

"Where's Milton?" Waterlow asked of the last, who was the agent known as Dryden.

"Here I am, Skipper," a richly unctuous voice proclaimed from the doorway, and a great oval figure crossed the floor with a heavy sliding motion to the desk of his chief, beside which it stood brooding.

"Very hot, my reports to-day, Skipper," the agent called Milton muttered deeply for the benefit of the other agent who was preparing to retire, and at whom he had been glowering contemptuously. Waterlow, who knew that a brake jealousy was on the wheels of his machine, made haste to snub the ebullient Milton in the hearing of his rival.

"If they're as hot as you are, they'll be worth something. Faugh, you stink like a badger, Milton. Why don't you take a bath instead of sousing yourself with

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that filthy musk? Why don't you wallow, you fat tapir?"

But Milton had as thick a skin as the pachyderm he suggested.

"No time for baths, Skipper. Busy all day. Read my reports. I only ask that. You'll find them hot, Skipper. Hot. Very hot. They stink of information. Stink of it!"

With this he made a sound against the roof of his mouth as if in laying down on the desk before his chief his notes of a day's investigations he had drawn the cork from his own portentous and prepotent mysteriousness and was pouring out the result.

In spite of being boastful, pompous, dishonest, humourless, untruthful, vain, lecherous, cowardly, and in any task that he was given hopelessly and impenetrably crass, this product of a Maltese father and a Jewish mother, who spoke half a dozen languages perfectly, another half a dozen fluently, and half a dozen more well enough, was the most fruitful agent that Waterlow possessed, for he had assurance and cunning and what one had to call luck, though in justice to Milton this was often a mixture of his cunning and assurance. He had been sent out from London in the early days of the organization strongly recommended as a gallant fellow who had been wounded at La Bassée and who was too valuable a type to be sent back to the front. He had arrived with a torn sheet of paper, the other half of which had been sent to Waterlow in the Legation Bag.

"Like a glove," he had boomed when it was proved that the halves matched and that he was indeed the man. Not that his new chief could ever have had the least doubt

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at he was the man from the moment he saw him. Nobody could possibly have taken him for anything except a secret service agent. He must have seemed in London the embodiment of their dreams. He had oozed murk and mystery and perspiration when Waterlow first met him in the attic of the squalid little hotel at which he had taken up on arrival, and where he had lodged ever since, and he never spent a halfpenny on luxurious surroundings, and he had been oozing murk and mystery and perspiration ever since. But he was not content to play for himself and for others the part of a famous international spy : he wanted also the reputation of romantic valour. The first thing he had done after the establishment of his identity was to take from his kitbag a khaki uniform with sergeant's stripes.

"Will I have any chance of wearing it here, Captain?" he had asked with yearning in his voice. And when told "none whatever," he had sighed and brushed a sleeve across his big dark animal's eyes.

"But I can't part with it, Captain," he had groaned. "I've been through hell in that old uniform. Sergeant Vas, and I got this bayonet thrust at La Bassée."

He rolled up his shirt to show Waterlow a white scar on the forearm.

"But I got the B. Excuse the language. I'm rough. But I'm ready. Sprechen sie Deutsche, Captain? No? Well, I tell you in English what I said to him. I said, 'You German swine, you'll go to hell for that!'" And I told him there before he had time to hear what I'd told him. Oh, yes! He went. Any work you want like that? I'm the man!" He patted himself on the chest and accepted the pseudonym of Milton, on which he felt

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that he bestowed lustre, for he had never heard of the poet, and if he had he would not have considered him as important a person as himself.

The other members of the organization were to grow very sick of that bayonet thrust at La Bassée before long, and it was a great relief when it was discovered that Milton had never been wounded at La Bassée, indeed that he had never been at the front at all, but had got that scar from a broken glass during a brawl in a Salonica café two years before the war began. It was discovered further that he had never been a sergeant, and then that he had never been in the Army at all, and finally that the only uniform he had ever donned was that of the mate of a Genoese steamer, which he had stolen, and in which he had obtained two thousand liras by false pretences in Milan, masquerading there as an English naval officer in the first month of the war. The Italian authorities, who were at that period most anxious to do nothing that could possibly complicate their international relations, instead of putting him in jail had thought it more tactful to pack him over the frontier into France, whence in due course he had reached England, and finally had somehow or other been engaged for the secret service. A queer figure, with his big dark animal's eyes and his immense hooked nose, his sleek bulk and greasy hair, his rich polyglot voice and musk and perspiration.

Yet in spite of this unsavoury effect he had an astonishing influence over cocottes and an equally astonishing ability to gain the confidence of strangers. He had a genius for starting hares, and though he had neither mind nor skill nor pluck nor patience to hunt them, though he was incapable of discrimination in satisfying his low

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cunning and curiosity, he had to be credited with some of the best hares that the organization ultimately ran down. In a tight place he would have pushed his best friend in front of him, and if the friend had been killed he would, without compunction, have picked his pockets while he was hiding under the corpse. Yet Waterlow would have sacked many of the people in his employment before Milton, and this afternoon he picked up his envelope with the confident expectation that if this gross larded mountebank beside his desk said that he had secured something very hot he was as likely as not to be right.

"Any more news of the German officer?" he asked, with a smile, as he tore open the envelope and looked at the notes written out in a large neat rounded upright hand.

Milton stood firm as the Sphinx.

"I say nothing, Skipper. Deeds, not words. That's my motto," he replied complacently.

Waterlow began to read :

"1. *The German officer reported by me to have arrived direct from Berlin was at the Tip Top Garden Theatre last night. He was drinking with Queenie Walters (suspect) and offered her two bottles of champagne, but did not go back with her to the Pension. To-morrow morning the King will receive him at the Palace.*

"2. *Queenie Walters calling herself English artiste, but believed to be German, is presently receiving visits from Arthur Radcliffe of the British Legation.*"

Waterlow put down the paper for an instant and asked sharply what authority he had for making such a statement.

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Milton extended his arms in a tremendous gesture worthy of some patriarchal drama in Canaan.

"It's god's truth, Skipper. He's mad about her. I got it from the girl who has the room next door to her at old Mère Bonbon's Pension. Adèle. Very smart girl. Very reliable girl." He smacked his lips.

"In love with you, of course," Waterlow sneered.

Milton made such a gesture as a conjurer makes at the conclusion of a successful trick.

"They can't help it, Skipper. I haven't given Adèle more than a coffee. But . . ."

He ceased. The wonder of his fascination was not to be expressed in words.

Waterlow turned over to the next note.

Arthur Radcliffe (suspect) . . ." he broke off angrily.

"What on earth do you mean by writing 'suspect' against the name of Mr Radcliffe, you farcical oaf?"

Milton was unmoved.

"He's a suspect to me, Skipper. I can't say otherwise. Queenie Walters is a suspect. Mr Radcliffe visits her. Mr Radcliffe becomes a suspect. Am I to blame?" He wagged his head gravely. "These things come to me."

"Well, you're never to write suspect against the names of members of the Legation. I never heard such infernal cheek."

"What's the Legation to me, Skipper?" he demanded woodenly, washing out any attempt to corrupt him by a hint of privilege with a gesture of his coarse grimy hands. "My business is to suspect everybody. I do. There isn't anybody in this city who can look Milton in the face. No one. Nohow. They're all afraid of me. If I go into a public lavatory, everybody inside trembles.

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They can't do anything. They tremble. I've seen them. Why ? Because they know that Milton's motto is deeds, not words."

"Keep quiet," Waterlow snapped. He had been running through the rest of the creature's notes while he was rumbling out self-praise in that queer accent which resembled no other he had ever heard. "What's this?" he ejaculated when he came to the last slip :

"1. *Mrs Radcliffe receives visits every day at the Hotel du Monde from Captain Paul Drimys (suspect).*

"2. *Captain Drimys is a fierce pro-German and is A.D.C. to the King.*"

"I can't help knowing what I know, Skipper."

"This twaddle about Mrs Radcliffe has no importance. No importance whatever, do you hear?" Waterlow declared angrily.

The agent shrugged massive shoulders that seemed to wobble like a camel's hump to express his helplessness before a fate that had endowed him with omniscience. He seemed to reel for a moment under the burden of ineluctable knowledge.

"I hear of these things, Skipper. It's my duty to report them."

"Well, don't start writing suspect in brackets after Mrs Radcliffe's name. All right. You can go."

The agent saluted and set out for the door with as much tremendous purpose in his gait, as if between him and it there were a thick jungle through which he should have to force a path.

"And, Milton!" Waterlow called after him.

He turned and saluted again.

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"This gossip about people connected with the Legation is not at all what I want. Stick to your German officer. You haven't even found out his right name yet."

"Von Dangel," Milton proclaimed. "Major Ernst von Dangel."

Waterlow grunted.

"That's about the sixth variant of his name I've heard since he arrived."

Milton shrugged his shoulders.

"I lead, Skipper. Others follow."

"All right. Get out now. And ask Mr Henderson to bring me the card of Queenie Walters."

Milton leaned over the scholar, breathing heavily.

"The Skipper's been knocked over by my information to-day, Mr Henderson. He wants the card of Queenie Walters (suspect). Oh, yes, I'm the man. The rest of them, Mr Henderson? Rotten!"

His ponderous tread died away. He had gone to join his colleagues in the big room. They would tease him for the next half-hour. Their derision would affect his complacency less than a dozen fleas off a monkey would affect the hind quarters of an elephant.

Henderson came in with the card of Queenie Walters and waited while Waterlow read out the brief history :

"A certain Krebs, known professionally as Zozo, acrobatic juggler and conjurer, alleged Swiss nationality, tall, large face, clean shaven, very large hands, speaking English well, accompanied by Queenie Walters of German origin possibly, carrying stolen passport of Maud Moffat, English variety artiste. Description: slim, very fair, blue eyes, pale, delicate, speaks German, Italian, French

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and English, left Bucharest at end of September. Probably travelled via Dedeagatch and Salonica. Nothing definite known against them, but man frequented company of notorious enemy agents in Bucharest, and is known to be bad character. Suggest he is likely to use woman to get in touch with British officers."

"That information came from London, I see," Waterlow commented.

"Yes. In 1915. We enquired about her at Salonica from time to time. But the answer was always 'nothing known,' until the other day."

He leaned over and pointed with an emaciated finger to the supplementary information :

"Said to have been expelled from Constantinople in March, and to hold British passport. Engaged at White Tower, Salonica. Much run after by English officers. Ordered to leave by the military authorities. Arrived here a month ago. Engaged to dance and sing at the Tip Top Garden Theatre. Lives at Pension Bonbon. Nothing known about the man Krebs, alias Zozo, either here or Salonica."

"Well, here's a snippet about her from Milton," Waterlow said, "which you may as well enter up right away. Wait a minute, I want to tear something off for myself."

He removed the bits about the Third Secretary and his wife. Then he gave Henderson the rest of Milton's sheaf to enter up, together with the sheaves of Dryden, Chaucer, and Tennyson.

"The German officer again?" the antiquarian mumbled,

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turning them over with a sceptical smile. "He's like the Spanish prisoner on our files. Or the Boojum."

"What's a Boojum?"

Henderson gabbled even more indistinctly than usual some lines from *The Hunting of the Snark*, which failed to enlighten his chief.

"Well, the war will be over one day, Henderson, and you'll be able to get back to your Early Christian remains or whatever they are."

"Not Early Christian," Henderson mumbled, putting his head on one side and smiling up at the ceiling. Then like a faint squeak he emitted, "Minoan," and slithered away to the door, at which he turned to gabble:

"No use entering up all this rubbish about German officers?"

He had to repeat this question three times before Waterlow could even guess what he had asked.

"As a matter of fact, from something Keats told me early in the week, I believe that this time he really may be genuine."

"Golly!" the antiquarian ejaculated. "I'll give him a clean pinnie for each of his nine names. I hope he won't have nine lives."

He siphoned a shrill aerated laugh at his joke and vanished.

Left alone Waterlow sat and stared at the two scraps of information about the Radcliffes. The visits of that little firebrand Drimys to Mrs Radcliffe would not have had the least importance in ordinary circumstances. No doubt, he was under the impression that he was gleaning odds and ends about the Legation, and using that as an excuse for philandering. But was Arthur Radcliffe to

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be trusted ? If he was capable of an indiscreet liaison with this pseudo-English dancing-girl, was he to be trusted not to confide in his wife tit-bits from the telegrams always coming and going ? A married man with a liaison on his conscience was always tempted to propitiate his wife in every way. It was an instinct of self-defence. And was Georgie Radcliffe proof against the flattery of a man like Paul Drimys ? The more one thought about it, the more inexcusable did the behaviour of both of them seem. Arthur must be unusually stricken by this girl's charm if he was prepared to risk his position like this. If Sir Frederic heard of it his Third Secretary would be shifted to some less important diplomatic centre. There were still a few left like Quito or Caracas where philandering in wartime could be carried on without prejudice to the political situation. And there was also the risk of Georgie Radcliffe's falling seriously in love. Women in love were more dangerous than men, because everything was used to reinforce their physical attraction. They were liable to reveal diplomatic secrets in the same spirit as they revealed that little amount more of leg. It was perhaps a pity he had not encouraged Georgie Radcliffe himself. She had been so obviously ripe for encouragement. Weak young diplomats with pretty little blonde wives should really not be employed so near the zone of war. Something would have to be done about the Radcliffes. What about getting hold of Arthur tonight and talking to him seriously ? He was on the point of ringing for somebody to put him through to the Legation or the Hotel du Monde when Crowder came back.

"I was just going to slip out and get a morsel of dinner before I went back to finish off my typing, Commander—

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sir, I mean," he gulped. "Will you be wanting me any more at present?"

Waterlow looked up and beheld an ageless baby's face regarding him nervously.

"Crowder!" he guffawed. "I thought for the moment you were upside down. Well, you needn't worry any more what you're going to do after the war. You can give up growing licorice and obtain a post as eunuch to some Anatolian pasha with three tails."

"Oh, come now, Commander W, I don't look as bad as all that without it," the fat man protested cheerfully, but with a touch of uneasiness.

"It's no good, Crowder, I shall never have the same confidence in you again. Without your moustache you look as idiotic as you really are. Take down this telegram. 'Regret loss of moustache makes it inadvisable to grant T. Crowder commission as Assistant-Paymaster, R.N.V.R. Please cancel.'"

"Oh, no, really, please, Commander W, you don't mean that. Oh, you couldn't!"

Waterlow seeing that his subordinate was on the verge of tears patted his plump back.

"All right, Crowder, all right. What I really want you to do is to telephone to the Legation and ask Mr Radcliffe to speak to me."

Crowder wrestled with the preliminaries only to find that the Third Secretary had already left.

"Try the Hotel du Monde."

"Mr Radcliffe's not in; but Mrs Radcliffe is in." Crowder announced after a minute or two, "Is there any message?"

Waterlow hesitated. Then he took the receiver himself.

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"This is Waterlow speaking, Mrs Radcliffe."

The charming voice at the other end seemed genuinely glad to be answering him. Arthur would be away to-night. He had gone to the Davenports. She was all alone. And so dull! Wouldn't Commander Waterlow come and cheer her up by dining with her? Oh, yes, she knew that he was always very busy, but surely he had to eat somewhere? So why not with her? Yes, of course, she remembered that he was dining with them to-morrow to go on to the party at the Legation. But was there any grave rule against dining two nights running at the same table?

"All right, I'll be round at half-past eight," he said, ringing off.

"Can I go to *my* dinner, now?" Crowder asked wistfully.

"Yes, yes, cut along. If Keats turns up at Ninety-eight to-night ring me up at the hotel and say that you're waiting for me here. I shall know what you mean, and I'll go round there at once. Tell them to keep him till I come."

In a burst of what sounded like perfectly naïve enthusiasm he caught hold of Crowder's arm and said, as a schoolboy might confide a secret to his best friend, "Look here, lad, I do believe there's just a chance we may have some sport with this German officer."

"We'll wring the blighter's neck," the fat man vowed.

"I'll drive back to the house now and get a bath before I go down to the hotel. I'll be home early, mind, to go through your stuff for the Bag. So don't slack about over your dinner. Give me the cauldron."

Crowder put on the table a small coal-scuttle. Water-

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low dropped into it the two pieces torn from Milton's notes, struck a match, and waited till they were burnt. There were no wastepaper baskets in any of his houses. He did not like wastepaper baskets. For five months now he had been receiving from the agent known as Keats two or three times a week, the fragments of the wastepaper baskets in the German Legation. These fragments were always pieced together with marvellous patience by Henderson. They took for him the place of the Minoan potsherds he used to piece together just as patiently in the days before the war. He had made a joke about it :

"My war work is piece work," he chuckled once, and then coughed painfully.

"Never mind, it's jolly useful to me," Waterlow could honestly assure him.

"Yes, but a shocking waste of time in reality."

That was the time Waterlow wrote to headquarters and asked if a job could not be found for Henderson in Switzerland, and he tried not to feel relieved when the answer from London was 'No.'

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It was wonderful the way Georgie Radcliffe had managed to lend an illusion of home and permanence to that sitting-room in the Grand Hotel du Monde merely by moving the furniture about, by adding two or three old pieces of her own picked up since she had been out here, by flowers and photographs. When the waiter had left the coffee and brandy on the table and turned out all the lights except the two amber-shaded reading lamps which illuminated gently a corner of the room cut off from those bleak double-doors of continental hotels by a high lacquer screen, it might have been a butler who had gone out of the room, and this might have been the hostess's favourite corner in an English country house. Well, not quite, Waterlow thought smiling, for in a country house the hostess's bedroom would not have opened out of her favourite corner. He glanced at the door which had hidden her for a few moments' colloquy with her mirror, and after pouring himself out a glass of brandy and lighting a cigarette he chose the armchair which faced that door, leaving to his hostess the wide, comfortable, brightly-cushioned settee that ran the length of the high lacquer screen, a tub of oleander in full rosy bloom at its head. It was going to be difficult to introduce the subject of Captain Paul Drimys. Such a topic would interrupt the charming and intimate atmosphere of the evening as effectually as if the spruce little dago were to pay an unexpected visit

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in person. Still, she ought to be told that his visits had been noticed. Extraordinary fellow, Arthur Radcliffe, to be making a fool of himself over a blonde cocotte when he had a wife with that glinting light brown hair, who ought to be enough to keep a man busy for a year or two more yet. No wonder she had spoken so bitterly about him at dinner. Or was it her fault? Was the cabaret girl offering Arthur something that his wife denied him? Young, handsome, rich, but weak, oh, so very weak. Perhaps that was the trouble. Perhaps she despised his weakness, herself as hard as the china shepherdess she so exquisitely resembled. And as brittle?

The door of the bedroom opened, and she emerged in a *négligé* of some soft rosy stuff with creamy lace everywhere, so that when she flung herself down on the settee, with one slim leg beneath her and the other dangling in a shimmer of silk over the edge, it seemed as if the oleander had shed a heap of fragile blossoms there. She had left the light burning in her room and the door ajar. From his chair Waterlow could see beyond the dim sitting-room her discarded dress of coral satin lying in a bright delicious huddle at the foot of the bed.

"You don't mind my coming in like this, do you? But I was so damned hot in that dress."

"Mind? Why should I mind?" he found himself asking mechanically. "Shall I pour you out a brandy?"

"No, thanks, only coffee. I can't drink in this weather, except sweet squashy muck. Isn't it vicarage of me?"

He carried the cup of coffee across to her, and as she took it from him the lightest touch of one of her fingernails sent the blood up into his throat. He felt that he must seize that small hand, and for the sweet pain of it

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crush it upright in his own hands until those sharp shining nails stabbed his palm.

"You're looking very severe, Commander Waterlow," she mocked.

"I'm feeling very severe, Mrs Radcliffe," he replied, blinking ; and then mumbling that it was the dust which made him blink he managed somehow to reach his own chair again.

She had given him a perfect cue to bring up the subject of Paul Drimys. Damn Drimys! *If you be a lady, as I suppose you be, you will neither laugh nor cry while I tickle your knee.* Yes, that must have been communicated. She was covering it up. Paul Drimys? The political situation? Mustn't forget we're at war. Nothing in it, of course. But still, it was imprudent. Yes, he could probably span her ankle with his forefinger and thumb.

"I really think you've known me long enough by now to call me by my own name," she was sighing.

"I might say the same," he was just aware of answering.

"Yes, but you waited for me to say it first."

"Twenty years' seniority makes a man modest."

"But a man is as old as he feels, isn't he?"

Yes, wide-open, innocent as speedwells. And yet . . . and yet . . .

"Do you mind if I have another brandy?" He gulped it down. "Gad, Georgie, I feel as if I was on leave to-night."

She laughed that absurd little laugh of hers which was so much like a coo.

"Fancy the head of the secret service wanting a second brandy to call poor little me by her Christian name!"

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She had given him another cue to speak about those afternoon visits from Drimys. *Look here, Georgie, I want to talk to you as a friend. It's about this chap that comes to call on you every afternoon. You see, what I feel is that if you be a lady, as I suppose you be, you . . .*

"Am I showing a great deal of leg, Roger? So sorry."

She arranged her clothes with an exaggerated primness.

"And Arthur's down at the Davenports?"

"Yes. But must we talk about Arthur?" she asked, knitting her eyebrows and letting her eyes fade into a dislustre of weary contempt.

"You're rather unkind about him, you know."

The knitted eyebrows were ravelled in a scowl.

"He bores me," she declared passionately. "Oh god, if you only knew how much he bores me."

"After being married two years, isn't it?"

"He bored me before I ever married him."

"Then why did you marry him?"

"Oh, because it was such a bore being proposed to all the time. But do talk about something more interesting than Arthur. Why not yourself, for instance?"

This was not a subject that appealed to Waterlow. He shook his head.

"I can't think why you don't give me some work to do for you," she said reproachfully. "I should be such a marvellous spy. Roger, I do think you neglect your opportunities. Why don't you help yourself to the brandy?"

He flushed.

"There's no need to sneer at me because I'm trying to remember that this is only a pleasant interlude in my existence."

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"Sneering at you?" she echoed. "How ridiculous of you to think that. And what do you mean by a pleasant interlude?"

"You know perfectly well what I mean. What else could it be for a drunken failure like me? I can't afford to spend my time philandering round you like . . ." he hesitated. Here was the perfect occasion to read her a lecture about Drimys. But he did not finish the sentence. He jumped up from his chair and sat beside her on the settee. She was leaning back in the corner and drawing him closer with her eyes each fraught moment. A petal of the oleander, shaken by the violence of his movement, fluttered down and lay in the hollow beside her neck.

"Ugh! What is it?" she shuddered, twisting her head to see.

"Only one of your flowers, Georgie," he murmured, as he put his hand out to pick off the petal; but when his fingers touched her he let his hand grasp the top of her shoulder and pressed the petal into the hollow of the bone.

"Am I hurting you?"

She shook her head faintly. Through the leaves of the oleander the rose-fired opening of her bedroom seemed to grow wider. And looking at her lips he saw that they, too, were slowly parting and that her eyelids were beginning to droop. He let his hand slide down the length of her soft surrendering form. She sighed and nestled back.

"Oh, Georgie, this is folly," he cried, and crying so sprang up to gather her into his arms.

From the table beside the settee the telephone sounded shrilly.

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"Oh god, let the damned thing ring, Roger," she murmured petulantly.

But the noise snarled between her and him like an angry little dog. He must silence it ; and he took off the receiver.

"Yes, this is Mrs Radcliffe's room. Yes, it's me speaking."

And then (from the world of reality or the world of fancy?) the voice of Crowder answered :

"Keats is here, and he says he has something important to tell you."

"I'll come along at once. You're getting on with that report, I hope? I want it finished by the time I get back, don't forget."

An injured voice spoke of having been typing steadily for the last hour and a half.

"Thus, my dear Georgie," said Waterlow, hanging up the receiver and ringing off, "does the sweet little cherub aloft look out for the morals of poor Jack."

"You're not really going to leave me?" she gasped.

"I'm not my own master in these times. I must go at once," he insisted abruptly, almost angrily.

"But it's still quite early," she expostulated. "You can come back, can't you? Or is it a woman?"

He laughed.

"Now, should I have accepted your delightful invitation to dinner, my dear child, with such an assignation hanging over my head?"

"Well, you *will* come back presently?"

"No, no, it may be midnight before I'm through with my evening's work. Look here, I must go, really."

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He picked up her limp hand and wrung it in a friendly way.

"I'll see you to-morrow at dinner," he reminded her.

"Oh, damn to-morrow," she cried in exasperation.

"What's the good of that?"

Turning for an instant to glance back at her before he vanished round the high screen he saw that her face was puckered up in a rage of tears, her lip turned down like a furious baby's. He hurried away. She looked quite ugly crying like that.

When Waterlow hurried through the lobby of the hotel he was aware of hoping that the porter had noticed the earliness of the hour; and this self-consciousness helped him to realize how grateful he ought to be to that telephone for saving him from a such a wild indiscretion. His drive in the car through the moonlit city gave him the exultant relief that only those who have ever found themselves safely escaping at last from physical danger will understand. There had been one or two occasions off the Anatolian coast when he had felt like this as the motor-boat forged away from the bullets of some Turkish patrol hidden at dawn in the olives above the shore. Quick whinings in the air, thunder drops astern or leaping fish ahead, and sometimes a thud on the sandbags, and once a crash of glass in the cabin: then suddenly a sweet serenity. That great green land which stretched hence away to Pekin was losing itself in the golden dazzle of the rising sun.

He felt now, as he leaned back in the car and let the faint and tepid night breeze flutter round his closed eyes, that never had his work here offered such a promise of fruitfulness. Keats had an instinct for what was genuinely

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important. Keats had never let him down. If he had told Crowder that he had important news, it was nearly certain that he was right. He thought of the day when Keats had first offered his services. From the very beginning he had been convinced of his own utility. An unsigned note had arrived one evening to say that if Captain Waterlow would be seated at ten o'clock the following night on the fifth bench to the right along the main walk of the Constitution Gardens he would hear of something to his advantage. He had laughed and sent one of his minor enquiry agents to keep the appointment. Nothing had happened, and on the next evening another note was left at Number Ten to say that the writer would only deal with Captain Waterlow himself. This time he sent Crowder. Again nothing happened, and the next evening a third note repeated the demand to see himself. Without the slightest hope of anything's coming of it, he had decided to go in person. Crowder had protested. Such pertinacity could only mean a plot by the Germans to kidnap the chief. To humour Crowder and amuse the others he had consented to the formation of an elaborately secret bodyguard that would be close at hand when he went to keep the appointment. A diversion of this kind braced up work all round. It was like allowing children as a special treat to play a really exciting game for once. To pass a whole day pretending that the Germans were going to kidnap their chief would mean the solution of several problems fading out of mind in the back pages of the big ledger. Whoever the correspondent was, he had no intention of revealing himself in the neighbourhood of a bodyguard. The next evening another letter had been left at Number Ten to say that unless Captain Waterlow

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kept the appointment in person and alone, the writer should give himself no further trouble in the matter : “ *I am not to be making myself to become one fool for make laugh peoples who swell themselves to be big and the heads of them are full of beans.* ” The threat had sounded genuine. Waterlow had had a hunch that this unknown correspondent meant business. He had paid no more attention to the remonstrances of his staff and kept the appointment. To his surprise it had been a woman who had seated herself on the bench beside him and murmured, “ *Voulez-vous me suivre, monsieur ?* ” So he had followed her through the frore, misty air of the February night along the crackling paths of the Gardens. Looking round from time to time to see by whom perhaps they were being followed, and seeing nothing except the blur of the city’s lamplight beyond the silhouettes of dripping ilex-trees, and here and there on the benches lovers oblivious of time and sodden weather. At last they reached the main gate. The woman had taken up her stand on the pavement by the stopping-place for trams, and when he had jumped aboard the great clanging car he had sat opposite to her and had seen that she was old and wrinkled and dressed in rusty black. About a mile from the heart of the city the woman had alighted at a general stopping-place and turned off down a side-street. By this time the darkness of the night had cast a slight chill upon him, and he had begun to wonder whether after all it was prudent to follow that old wrinkled woman dressed in rusty black into this dim silent quarter of the city whither she was leading him. Not that he had fancied any nonsense about being kidnapped by Germans, but in the course of his work he had had to make himself a nuisance

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to several desperate characters. A knife in the back was not such an entirely ridiculous notion. Certainly it had been a relief to reach one turning after another and find it empty. At last the woman had paused beside a tall unlighted house and peered anxiously up and down the street before she took a key from her bag and put it in the lock of the wide, glass-fronted door. She had held it back for him to pass in before her, and in the blackness he had felt his pulses quicken. Then she had muttered something about turning on the light. A bulb had come to life on the floor above. She had led the way upstairs and opened the door of the flat. This, too, was unlighted when they entered. She had shown him into an empty room, the chief feature of which was an aquarium on the table in the middle, to the mottled inmates of which the woman chirped a greeting as if they were canaries in a cage. "*Attendez un peu, monsieur, s'il vous plaît,*" she had said in the tinny Levantine accent that turns French into almost the ugliest language of civilization, and then with another chirp to the goldfish she had left him alone. He had waited quite ten minutes in a silence that the silent motion of the fish in their circumscribed bottle-green world made more complete. Then he had heard the outer door of the flat gently closed, and a few whispers in the hall. A moment after, a small man with mousy hair and pale ragged moustache had come surreptitiously into the room and stood eyeing him from very pale blue eyes that were filmed with suspicion and furtiveness almost as if by a visible cataract.

"You know who I am?" he had asked in English, and to his visitor's shake of the head he had said with a contemptuous smile :

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“ Ah, then I am able to tell to you something which your grand bureau does not know, and I tell to you, Capitaine Waterloo, that you have in your employment a lot of fools. They can do nothing. I am laughing at them every day. What you pay them for do nothing and swell with bigness and be secret polices like that? ”

“ That is my business.”

“ But when I tell to you that I am the porter for the German Legation I think you will pay me more. How much you pay me to tell what I am finding out there about who comes, who goes, what they speak, and perhaps, if it is easy, to steal a paper from the desk of Koenig, the Marine Attaché? ”

Of course, they had haggled over the monthly salary. One haggled over every transaction out here. But in the end, when he had agreed to pay six hundred francs a month to him who was to be known in future as Keats, he had felt convinced that he had driven the best bargain since the Bureau was started. And so it turned out. For five months now that surreptitious little man had met him three times a week in secret. Nobody except Crowder and Henderson knew of his employment. All the other poets were building up a career of villainy for him in the suspect files under his real name. Milton had more than once expressed his determination to beat him senseless at the first favourable opportunity. Dryden had fancied him so dangerous to the interests of the Allies that he had put forward a plan for luring him down to the harbour and drowning him some dark night. His salary had mounted up a hundred francs a month. It was a thousand now, and he earned it. He had the right kind of memory. Not a person had visited the German Legation whose

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accurate description he had not provided together with a scrap or two of his conversation and some hint of his business there. He was always attending to the fires in winter, to the blinds in summer. Every block of wood he had put on the fire in the Military Attaché's room had been put on in exchange for a scrap of conversation ; and every time the Minister's blind had been pulled up or down it had been done at a moment when he had an important visitor closeted with him. No scrap of torn paper in the baskets that he could save was ever burnt. It was all smuggled out of the legation and sometimes filled a suitcase when he brought it to Waterlow. And gradually Waterlow had grown fond of the surreptitious, mousy-haired little man. He was so infernally efficient. He had such an appreciation of significant detail. Most of the poets had no more ability to describe a man than a passport. Keats would always seize the feature that differentiated him. He had no use for brown hair and medium noses. He looked for moles and scars and tricks of gait and manner. The other poets knew vaguely that a man's suit was dark. Keats noticed his tie-pin or the odd buttons on his waistcoat. What ceaseless trouble had been taken not to compromise Keats! He was never allowed to come twice to the same rendezvous in the same fortnight. The cost of housing him had been almost as much as his salary. And his own meticulous prudence justified such expense. He had never spared himself the fatigue of the most elaborately circuitous approach, and he never forgot a sou of his own disbursements in securing such circuitousness. He worshipped money ; but he never forgot for a moment that he was an artist. When it was necessary to mortify him, one

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need only show a hint of indifference to his news or, what pained him even more, let him know that one of the other poets had anticipated him. And if Waterlow had an affection for him it was returned, so that Keats never met him or left him without clasping his hand in his own that was cold and clammy as a snake. What tit-bits had Keats in his larder to-night?

"Stop at the next corner, Gunton," Waterlow ordered, "and wait for me at the Café Apollo."

The exhilaration of walking quickly though the warm moonlight toward a secret rendezvous was no longer inspired by his escape from Georgie Radcliffe. She had faded from his mind by now. The only thing that mattered now was the information that Keats might have for him in that room, behind the little barber's shop where all day the agent Number 29 was shaving simple, humdrum people until word came that the centre in Broussa was safely re-established and that he might be landed again near Aivali with some prospect of a profitable sojourn in Constantinople.

Waterlow tambourinated with his knuckles on the shop-door the rhythm of the soldier's chorus from *Faust*. It was opened immediately by an astonishingly genial deaf-mute who mopped and mowed his pleasure at seeing him. This deaf-mute used to sit patiently with one hand on the panel of the door and thus receive the impression of the rhythmic signal. Waterlow nodded to Number 29, a small stolid greasy man who was reading an evening paper, passed quickly through the warm scented atmosphere of the shop to the room behind, where Keats was pacing nervously to and fro, a heavy white muffler wrapped round the lower part of his face. During the

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first month of his engagement, Waterlow had often remonstrated with him for this simulation of a man with toothache, insisting that it only made his passage through the streets more likely to attract the curiosity of passers by. But nothing would induce Keats to forgo this muffler, or, what his chief deprecated even more, the carrying of a loaded revolver in his trousers pocket.

"Let me to make my own ways, Capitaine," he would say. "It is I who risk my life to bring you the best information you are having."

Waterlow realized that paradoxically it was this belief in his life's being at stake which gave Keats the courage to keep these evening appointments three times a week. If at this date Keats had suddenly given up the muffler and the loaded revolver, it would have made Waterlow suspect that he was being sold in turn to the Germans; and it was always a relief to him when Keats showed by a crisis of nerves that he still believed in his protectors.

"Still that damned muffler," he said, teasing the agent as usual this evening for his own security.

And Keats waved his arms.

"Ah, my god, Capitaine, you will make me to become yellow with rage if you are speaking so. I bring you such informations as you can never have, and if I am seen it will be for me the death."

"Yes, you'll jump at your own shadow and pull the trigger of that idiotic revolver."

The agent raised his outspread hands and looked up as if calling on Heaven to witness what he must endure from human folly.

"All right, all right," Waterlow laughed. "But I

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don't want to lose you yet, Keats. You're too useful, you know."

The exasperated little man cheered up instantly at this sign of appreciation.

"Splendid informations for you this evening, Capitaine. I come to tell you about the German officer for who you are so anxious."

Waterlow did not attempt to hide his satisfaction.

"That pleases you much, I think ? But if I give you the informations you want I will be receiving a hundred francs more this month, yes? "

"I don't know what the information is yet. But if it is good enough to enable me to make practical use of it, why, yes, you shall have eleven hundred next month," he promised.

Keats looked puzzled for a moment.

"Practical ? Practical ? What is that ? *Ah, oui, je comprends.* You mean if I give you the way to . . . ? " he paused. His light blue eyes seemed to curdle when his thin fingers closed round his neck as lovingly as a violinist grasps the neck of his instrument.

"Never mind what I want to do with him, Keats. That's not your business."

"He would be very well so," the little man murmured dreamily ; and then his tone changed sharply to a rasping indignation. "I would do so with all the dam Germans who are paying to me as porter at their legation one hundred and fifty francs a month." Indignation expired in contemptuous pity. "The poor fools," he commented.

Waterlow took a small notebook from his waistcoat.

"Come along, Keats. Never mind about German folly. What news have you ? "

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The little man, according to his regular custom, prepared the stage for himself. He darted to the door, opened it quickly, walked on tiptoe along the passage, noted that the curtain was drawn over the door into the shop and the door itself closed, came back into the room, shut the door of that with tremendous caution, prodded the window curtains, and then, as it were, turned up the footlights and began his performance.

"Listen to what I tell you," he said in the low vibrant accents of drama. "Now, this evening at eight o'clock, comes to the Legation this German officer of who I tell you."

"And several others also," Waterlow interrupted. Keats was not going to earn an extra hundred too easily.

"The others!" Keats ejaculated scornfully. He looked at Waterlow and twitched the lapel of his coat. This was the Levantine gesture to signify disdain of utter worthlessness. "I speak for my eyes, not my hears only like them," he said haughtily. "This German officer is tall, with big moustaches, so." The little man adjusted his own ragged moustache with a gesture the Kaiser might have envied. "He asks to me to see the Military Attaché. 'Yes, poor pig!' I think, 'I will to show you.' So I show him to von Waldstein's room. And when I leave them in the room I go back inside quickly with an excuse that I think I am hearing somebody call for me, and I hear this Major von Rangel . . ."

"Oh, you spell it with an R. Milton spells it with a D," Waterlow interposed.

"Why you must have this dam fool Milton when you are having me I cannot to understand," he said wearily.

"Never mind, go on."

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"This Major von Rangel is standing so, near to von Waldstein's table." The little man assumed the rigid dignity of the German machine. "And when I come in I hear him say in German, but it is no use for me to say to you in German because you cannot to understand German, and I must say it to you in English, 'After two or three days I will go and I will take the letter from the King.' But now I have come into the room, and when I come in he jumps and looks at me with his moustache, and von Waldstein, he jumps up and curses at me for that I am a fool. And I think 'ha-ha, but it is you who are being the bloodidam fool, my friend.' And all the way, when I am coming to you with my handkerchief round my face, I am laughing into my handkerchief, and I am thinking how you will catch this high officer, and how I will be having a hundred francs to my salary this month."

Waterlow looked at his idle pencil which was still waiting for pregnant details. Keats was not going to earn a hundred francs more every month for this.

"Yes, so far so good, Keats. But we don't know the exact date the fellow leaves and we don't know which way he's going north."

Triumph over the weakness of average petty flesh expressed itself in the little man's face by some rapid readjustment of its angular pattern, like the shifting of a hueless kaleidoscope.

"You will wait a minute, please, and hear what I am telling you," he said, wagging his forefinger and lowering his voice to an even more vibrant impressiveness. "Five minutes after I am in the room of von Waldstein, I am in the room of Koenig, the Marine Attaché, and

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there is with him the Minister himself, and when I come in they stop to speak until I am going out again, but with much cleverness I make the door to pretend he is shut and I hear Koenig say that the submarine will take him from . . .”

“Well?” said Waterlow quietly enough, though his heart was beating and his throat dry.

Keats shook his head mournfully.

“Alas, at that moment the Marine Attaché treads across the room and bangs the door so that I am nearly dead with fright, and my legs lose their insides when I go back as fast as I am able to the hall.”

“But the place, the place?” Waterlow groaned in despair. “There are twenty places—forty—fifty where a submarine might pick him up.”

The little man patted his shoulder to console him.

“Do not weep, Capitaine,” he said. “I shall try to find out where is the place. We shall have to-morrow and to-morrow after for to find out. And perhaps if I am finding out I will open my envelope and see five hundred francs or perhaps a thousand together with my month’s salary which will now be eleven hundred, please, if I find the place or if I do not. Yes?”

“Yes, yes,” Waterlow agreed impatiently.

“I am not wishing for this increasement if you are not thinking that I deserve it,” said Keats. “I am very proud, and if my mother was not always crying that I must soon be killed I would not ask for more moneys. ‘First, my fishes must all die,’ she has cried to me last night, ‘and now you must also die, my son.’ She is being very sad, and it is only when she is counting my money that she can have peace. And when the war is over she

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will buy with my money a land for grow tobacco. And so she will be content."

"Nothing else of interest to tell me?" Waterlow asked. As if there could be now!

"Nothing," Keats replied. "I have not to-night brought the bits of paper from the baskets because I am so much afraid to be suspect before I know where the submarine will come to take the German officer."

Waterlow rose from his chair.

"I'll leave before you to-night, Keats," he said. "I've a great deal to do."

"Good night, Capitaine," said the agent, holding his chief's hand in his own cold delicate clammy hands and gazing affectionately deep into his eyes. "It will be for you a great good if you can catch this officer?" he asked eagerly.

"It would be very good, indeed."

"And I think perhaps it will be a more great good if you can catch the submarine?" he asked, watching sharply for any expression on Waterlow's face.

"That would *really* be good."

Keats nodded.

"Yes, I have seen your eyes dreaming so when I am saying about this submarine. It has come into my throat like that, because I have a great love for you, Capitaine. For you and for my mother and for nobody else. My father is dead. And now you are to me as my father."

Waterlow smiled. Ridiculous and exaggerated though the tribute might sound, he accepted it as sincere; there were not many people he trusted as he trusted this furtive, mousy-haired little man. He went quickly through the shop, nodding to Number 29 who was still reading the

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evening paper stolidly. The deaf-mute mopped and mowed his farewell salutations. The door closed softly behind him ; and a moment later he was walking quickly down the warm silvery street, stepping on shadow after shadow as he overtook a hundred loiterers, who were themselves no more than shadows, for there was no light except the moon's. The superfluous street-lamps had been extinguished for economy. The dust drifted like snow along the kerbstones, and the pavement under the foliage of the false-pepper trees was like lace. The sky was slung like a purple canopy between the glittering cornices of the tall white houses. The jangle and chatter of the people sitting outside the cafés had no suggestion of individual humanity. The sudden glow of a cigarette, the orange radiance of a lighted match, the fizz of a siphon, the rattle of a coffee cup, the tinkle of a spoon, even the shrill laugh of a woman—all these were sights and sounds of the natural scene like fireflies or the croaking of frogs or owls hooting. And in the middle of his dreams of personal glory, Waterlow asked himself sharply why these happy moon-blessed people should be heckled into going to war for the sake of a lot of money-grubbing Frenchmen and football-mad Englishmen. But a few minutes after, when he caught sight of Gunton waiting in his long grey car by the side entrance of the Café Apollo, he was seeing himself on the bridge of a trawler and round the next headland a long grey submarine. Yet if Fritz had his gun laid, what was the trawler going to do? There had been that trawler which had engaged a submarine off Samos. She had reached Vathy in a pretty mess, her old Lowestoft skipper asking why they didn't give him a bloody pea-shooter while they were about it

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instead of that Japanese three-pounder. Waterlow substituted a destroyer for the trawler, though he knew he would not be on her bridge. Yes, the right ship to come round the corner of that headland would be a destroyer just as Fritz was submerging. Little boy, pair of skates—what was the third line?—Heaven's gates. 'Who sent us the warning?' 'Lieutenant-Commander Waterlow, sir.' 'Ah, yes. Well, I think he's wasted where he is, don't you?' 'I do, sir, emphatically.' 'It seems to me he's just the fellow we want for that Q-ship.' 'Exactly so, sir.' 'There's nothing against him is there?' 'Nothing, sir, except that I'm told he used to drink rather more than was good for him.' 'Oh, well, but in a Q-ship?' 'Oh, quite, quite, sir.' 'Write to Captain T about him. I believe he's just the fellow we want. There's no doubt I suppose, they did get the submarine?' 'None whatever, sir. A lot of oil was seen, and a Fritz cap was picked up.' 'Splendid! Splendid!'

"Drive to the Legation, Gunton," said Waterlow; and the long grey car, ceasing to be an enemy submarine became a destroyer of the River class, to the command of which in fancy he had risen. Idle and foolish such a fancy no doubt, but how pleasant to indulge it by steaming thus at twenty-six knots through these silvery city streets.

It was already nearly eleven o'clock; but Sir Frederic Ovenden, the Minister, though always wonderfully accessible was most accessible at such an hour. Earlier in the day consultations with him were liable to be continually interrupted by the entrance of one of the Secretaries with drafts of telegrams to the Foreign Office or of notes

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to this or that Excellency who was clinging for a brief space to office before he, like so many others, was swept away by the angry tides of war. Waterlow hated these interruptions when he was talking to Sir Frederic. They made him self-conscious, as if in suddenly breaking off from what he was saying he were pretending to an importance that must appear ridiculous to a sophisticated young diplomat. Not that he had anything to complain of in the way the occupants of the Chancery treated him. Considering what an uncouth barbarian he must appear to them they were extraordinarily pleasant ; and if he had to choose between being treated seriously, but with the chill of excessive courtesy added, and being accepted as a rather amusing joke, he would certainly never have hesitated to choose the latter alternative. " Ah, here's the Jolly Roger," Amberley, the senior of the two Second Secretaries, would exclaim. " Let us know in good time, won't you, if you're thinking of blowing up the capital. Six telegrams for you this morning. If you find it necessary to declare war this afternoon, just telephone first to us so that we can notify the Foreign Office." They were vaguely aware of course that he was engaged in finding agents to risk their lives in Turkey or Bulgaria ; but to them such an occupation had about as much importance as the soap-bubbles blown out of a clay pipe by a child. And when Waterlow thought of the risk of life that the collection of such information meant, of the labour involved in extracting it from the lucky agents who managed to get back, of the trouble and expense of telegraphing a digest of it to headquarters, of its probable lack of utility and almost certain lack of use, he was inclined to think that blowing bubbles would have been a more conspicuous,

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but by no means necessarily a more actual waste of time and energy and ingenuity. When there was a chance of hampering the enemy by landing an agent with explosives to destroy one of his railway-bridges, that, of course, was another matter ; but these scraps of useless and inaccurate gossip were a survival from the earlier methods of warfare. And even then the work of spies had been mostly negligible. Nowadays with wireless and aeroplanes, this kind of espionage was superfluous, to say the least that could be said against it. Yes, the occupants of the Chancery were right not to take his work seriously ; it was only a pity that their commonsense did not extend a little farther and become equally sceptical of the value of their own job.

However, there was one person in the Legation who did take Waterlow's work seriously, and that was Scrutton, the door-keeper. To him the thought of Waterlow's being always at hand gave the same kind of confidence that a lonely caretaker left in charge of a large mansion might get from the occasional visits of a policeman to say he was keeping an eye on the neighbourhood. Scrutton, after twenty years' residence in this city, had come to the conclusion that the natives of it were capable of any blooming thing. Since he had been married to one of them for most of the time, perhaps his opinion was based on sound experience. He knew that it was at least a part of Waterlow's job to outwit natives, and this induced him to regard Waterlow himself with a grateful veneration.

"Treat 'em hard, Captain," he would say. "That's the only way. I've had some."

Scrutton had been burnt a rich mahogany by the sun of twenty years. With his heavy black moustache and

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sharp dark eyes he looked himself very much like one of those despised natives, and if one had heard him gabbling away in that native language to some pertinacious suitor on the steps of the Legation, it was a shock after the door had been firmly closed in the face of the nuisance to hear him comment in crisp biting cockney :

“ Can’t take ‘ no ’ for an answer. Chronic, that’s what these chaps are. A blooming Frenchman couldn’t behave more uncivilized. And what a language! Five minutes just to say, ‘ Hop off.’ Why, it ’ud be laughable if we wasn’t so busy with the war.”

Scrutton beamed his usual welcome when he let Waterlow into the big marble hall of the Legation this evening.

“ Ah, I’m glad you’ve looked in again to-night, sir. Sir Frederic’s up in his room. Mr Amberley and Mr Vane-Howard haven’t been gone more than a quarter of an hour. They had a long telegram come in just before they went out to dinner.”

“ Mr Radcliffe wasn’t here? ”

“ No, sir. Well, as a matter of fact he’s gone away for the night and won’t be back till to-morrow morning. I think Mr Amberley was a bit annoyed when this long telegram arrived, and he had to come back after dinner himself. Will you go straight up to Sir Frederic, sir? Oh, and you’ll excuse me bothering you, but we’ve taken on a new under-porter this afternoon. Colonel Buckworth recommended him. He was at the Colonel’s hotel, but you know what it is with these blooming natives. You can’t trust one of ’em, not a yard. And before I leave him on duty alone I’d like you to let me know if he’s considered all right.”

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“What’s his name ? ”

Waterlow entered the name in his pocket-book and promised to let Scrutton know to-morrow if there was anything against the newcomer.

“Thank you, sir. I don’t like the looks of him, I’m bound to say ; but there, if it comes to that, I don’t like the looks of any of ’em. In fact the only unpleasantness I’ve ever had with my missus is when I’ve criticized her relations. Slippery Know Alls that’s what I call ’em. Why don’t they declare war on the Germans? Nootrality? Blooming cheek I call it! I’ll be in my room when you come down again, sir. I always keep the big door locked after ten o’clock.”

Waterlow went on up the curved marble stairs and walked round the wide balustraded lobby at the head toward Sir Frederic’s room, thinking of the scene it would present to-morrow evening at this time, full of music and uniforms and the swish of silk. And then he thought, “I’ll put on uniform myself.” And then he thought, “I’m as bad as Crowder.” And then he thought, “But I will, all the same.”

Sir Frederic’s room was comfortably dim when he entered it. Indeed, the only light was the reading lamp on his desk at which his form was beetling over a small portable typewriter that looked as if it would collapse under the strokes of his huge hands. The despatches and drafts of telegrams he pounded out upon the foolscap were not the blunt communications this blacksmith’s vigour seemed to betoken. On the contrary while they were remarkable for the neatness and simplicity of their style they possessed a certain supple and mocking grace and a scholarly allusiveness which was apt to be disconcerting to

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Secretaries of State. Nobody could have guessed from his appearance that Sir Frederic was a diplomat. A judge some people might have said, or a distinguished barrister who could have been a judge, but never a diplomat. He was at least six feet three inches tall with a large head and exceptionally broad shoulders that made him look a giant. His deep-furrowed clean-shaven face peered down at a visitor above a neck loose-skinned as a tortoise's. He was on the grand Judaic scale, though actually without any Jewish blood ; but no man with that fleshy hooked nose and thick dropping underlip could have expected to avoid the ascription.

"Good evening, Waterlow," he said in his deep voice. "Just let me read through what I have been writing. Take a cigar. I wish to goodness somebody would design a cigar that could be smoked while playing this broken-down dulcimer of mine."

He read through the telegram or despatch he was composing, and, his tongue between his horsy teeth, touched up the document with a drawing-pen, etched in, as it were, the delicate phrases that would make the complete work so lucid and so nice a communication.

"Now then?" he invited Waterlow, putting aside his work and sinking down into a deep armchair with the cigar he had had to deny himself too long.

"Well, sir, it's about this German officer who's arrived here direct from Berlin."

"Which German officer? You have told me of so many German officers arriving from Berlin. The last one, if I remember rightly, turned out to be the new Serbian Military Attaché."

Waterlow laughed.

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"Yes, I'm afraid most of the identifications have been a little hasty. But this time, sir, there is no doubt about it. This time there really is no question that a certain Major von Rangel has arrived here from the north."

"Well, he could hardly arrive from any other direction unless you sailormen have lost command of the sea."

"To-morrow morning he is going to see the King."

"So is Colonel Buckworth," said the Minister, grinning.

Waterlow grinned too. The visits of the British Military Attaché to the Palace were always very portentous affairs beforehand, at any rate within the precincts of the Legation. "Perhaps they'll meet. What fun!" Sir Frederic chuckled deeply.

"In three days he will leave again," Waterlow went on. "And he will probably carry some communication from the King as well as the Legation Bag."

"Probably," the Minister agreed drily. "Do you know, I believe I could have guessed that myself. You're not such an original Sherlock Holmes as I thought you were, Waterlow."

"No, sir, but the point is that these despatches are important enough to justify the Germans in sending a submarine to pick up the envoy."

"Don't believe it," the Minister snapped. "And if Williamson were here he wouldn't believe it."

Williamson was the Naval Attaché, who was at present away on leave.

"My information is very good, sir," Waterlow insisted. "I believe it myself," he added eagerly.

The Minister leaned back and roared with laughter.

"That's good. That's very good! The head of a

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vast underground organization who has kept me on a diet of horrors for many months admits for the first time that he is prepared to swallow one of his tit-bits without the slightest risk to his own digestion. Ha-ha! Capital! Capital!"

"Well, sir, I believe in it enough to risk telegraphing the information to Mudros."

"You'll have to fight your own battles with the Admiral. Don't you try to involve me in your naval disasters."

"Of course, I don't know yet where they propose to take him off in the submarine, and I don't know the time, but I'm hoping to find out."

"In which case you might ask the crew to dinner," Sir Frederic chaffed. "They'd probably appreciate a quiet meal."

"Well, sir, we'll leave the submarine out of it for the moment."

"Yes, I think I should," Sir Frederic said, twinkling.

"Why I've come to worry you to-night, sir, is to know whether, if we do have an opportunity to get hold of the German bag, the contents would be likely to prove sufficiently interesting to risk . . ."

Sir Frederic waved his arms.

"Stop! Stop! Don't try to drag me into your nefarious activities."

"I'm not, sir, but I don't want to embarrass our policy out here by upsetting the King, if this is not a suitable moment. His voice was touched by the slightest suggestion of triumph at having made the Minister take him seriously for a moment.

"Did you say our policy out here?"

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"Yes, sir."

"Your imagination, Waterlow, is getting a great deal too vivid. Don't you go about imagining policies and submarines and suchlike mythical animals."

"Then I can take it that the capture of the King's correspondence with Berlin would not be embarrassing?"

"You can take it that I don't want to hear another word on the subject."

"But you don't absolutely forbid me to have a try for it?"

"I most emphatically forbid you to have a try for the King's correspondence. I have nothing to do with the submarine part of it. If you took the German bag, it would have to be a naval operation. But if you listen to my advice you won't try to involve the Admiral in this business any more than me. There may be a German envoy here. He may be carrying interesting despatches. He may be going to ride home in a submarine. The war may end next month. None of these contingencies is impossible; but every one of them is mighty improbable. And now let me go back to my desk. I have a long letter to write to the Foreign Office. You know the Messenger comes to-morrow morning? And to-morrow evening we have this dreadful cold swarry with trimmings. Will you be able to spare a few moments from your submarine to add an extra frill?"

"Yes, sir, thanks very much. I'm dining with the Radcliffes and coming on with them, unless, of course, something urgent turns up."

"Capital! Well, good night, Waterlow."

"Good night, sir. I hope I didn't annoy you by coming round?"

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"Nothing annoys me any longer, Waterlow. Not even the war. Not even the Permanent Under-Secretary."

When Waterlow got downstairs he asked Scrutton to give him a sheet of notepaper. He sat down in the porter's little room beside the big front door and scribbled this note :

Dear Colonel B, Sir Frederic tells me that you have an audience to-morrow morning. You may care to know that the King will have seen a certain Major von Rangel who has come here direct from Berlin just before he sees you. Yours sincerely, W.

He sealed the envelope and told Scrutton to be sure it was given to the Military Attaché before he went to the Palace in the morning.

"You're lending Colonel Buckworth your car, I believe, sir? "

"Am I? I didn't know I was."

"I understood from him that he expected it to be round here for him at nine forty-five sharp."

"Well, I'm afraid he'll have to expect, Scrutton. But I'll see what can be managed. If it isn't here by nine-thirty, you'd better tell him not to count on it and send out for a hired car."

Waterlow flung himself back into that coveted car he had extracted from London by such innumerable patiently and impatiently argumentative letters and telegrams.

"Home, Gunton."

And as he drove quickly past the Hotel du Monde in the moonlight Waterlow did not even remember that he had dined there this evening. He only noticed when he reached the end of the long straight street leading to his

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house that the police agents were still clustered round the little cafés like sleepy flies ; and presently he was sitting by Crowder and prodding him from time to time in the ribs to prevent his falling asleep over the typewriter, while the fat man clicked away into the night on that long report, which as usual he had postponed until the last minute.

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It was just before Waterlow reached the Legation to visit the Minister that in the attic of the agent called Milton a cheap alarm-clock summoned him shrilly from sleep to the not less fantastic world of dreams through which, awake, he ponderously moved. He rolled over on the frowzy bed and grunted ; then after fumbling for a moment along the wall behind the bed he managed to turn on the electric light. He had taken off his coat and waistcoat, but otherwise he was fully dressed. His gross face glistened with perspiration. The night air coming in through the open window was not enough to cool perceptibly this little room, which, built close under a southward sloping roof, had been accumulating heat throughout the torrid day. He lay on his back, stretching, and looked at the scabrous grey plaster of the ceiling. He watched a couple of disconcerted bugs scuttling rapidly across the dingy blistered wallpaper to shelter in a crack. Even they were not beneath his notice. Even their timorous retreat afforded a certain measure of gratification to his complacency. They were typical of the human beings who would presently be scuttling to shelter at the rumour of his dreadful approach. He lay there for a minute or two, wallowing in the thought of the consternation that his arrival would create at the Tip Top Theatre before another half-hour had passed. It was not his habit to indulge in a second siesta. But this evening

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he had dined with Adèle, and since she was paying for the dinner he had eaten rather more than usual. She was an early turn at the Tip Top, and when she had left him about half-past nine to go and dress he had decided that to dine with a woman, listen to her performance of two songs that would not interrupt the dulllest conversation, and finally spend the rest of the night with her was too much for any woman to expect. So, he decided to omit the songs. It was a mistake to spoil women. Moreover, a short sleep would do him good. No man could expect to provide the kind of information with which he provided the Skipper and not look after himself a little whenever it was possible. Should he break down, where would the Skipper be? He might as well pack up and go home. What was it Crowder had said to him, "Milton, my boy, you're the man who's put the organ into our organization." There it was! Even Crowder had had to admit it. And the responsibility of it all! Who was going to tackle this Hun except himself? 'Hands up, you B. No squealing now, you German swine! You're up against the wrong man for that. Know who I am? Ever heard of Milton in Berlin?' And at those words Major Ernst von Dangel would turn pale. He would know then that he was caught at last. Yes, and held. Milton was not the man to let go, once anybody was in his grip. No wonder the Skipper had been so shook up by his information early this evening. "I suppose he reckons the devil himself is in his service," the agent muttered, as he licked off three or four beads from the side of his thick mouth. Another minute, and he must get up. Yes, he was the man. And the Skipper knew it. He was counting on him to outwit this Hun. Of course, he was. Who

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else was going to do it? "If it's an awkward job, it's a job for Milton." That was what the Skipper would say. That's what he had always said. Who had undertaken every dangerous and difficult job for more than a year? Milton. Well, he couldn't blame the Skipper. The Skipper had to think of what the country wanted. It was his duty to use the best man he had got. There had been that plan to hold up the German mail in the days when it used to go north by car. Who had been sent to keep an eye on the six irregulars that were to trench the road? Milton, of course. And when he had reached the frontier-town he had forgotten the name under which the Skipper was going to communicate with him. Why? Because of the danger he had run into with the place full of soldiers. What a week he had spent, trying to remember his false name. All day long bolted in the privy with a loaded pistol each side of him on the seat. Enough to turn any ordinary man's hair white. All day long, and people trying the door every five minutes. And what thanks had he received? To be called a bloody fool when he got back. If it had been anybody except the Skipper who had called him that, where would he be by now? Why, in his coffin. But he couldn't have shot the Skipper. No doubt, he had been all at sea without Milton for a week. One had to make allowances for a man sometimes.

With this reflection the agent called Milton pulled himself off the frowzy bed, and after practising upon his image in the looking-glass the effect of one or two new grim facial expressions he set about his toilet. It was a simple business. He sluiced some tepid water over his large face and dried it on a towel hardly bigger than a duster. He put his legs upon the window-sill in turn and wiped his

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new yellow boots with the muslin curtains. He sprinkled his dark khaki shirt with musk, smeared some vaseline on his hair, parted it very carefully with a toothcomb, and brushed it into a luculent smoothness with a brush, half the back of which had come unstuck leaving the foundations of the bristles exposed. Then he put on his coat and waistcoat of navy blue serge, took from the peg a hat of tawny brown velours, from the corner a crooked stick of exaggerated thickness, from under the greasy pillow two automatic pistols which he wedged into hip-pockets; and, setting his brows in a tremendous frown, his eyes in a ferocious glare, he set out for the night's adventures. It always hurt Milton's economy to hire a hackney-coach; indeed, the only way he could screw himself to the pitch of such an extravagance was by charging in his daily petty expenses for more vehicles than he had hired. However, once he had swallowed the notion of spending three francs of ready money without a chance of getting it back till the end of the week, he enjoyed his drive in rather the same spirit that one may imagine some of the more theatrically minded Roman emperors enjoyed their triumphs. He looked not unlike a cinema actor's conception of a Roman emperor in one of those restless swarming visions of a film producer's over-gilded mind, as, heaping his hands like a pair of cushions above the crook of his stick, he supported his chin thereon and glared fiercely from side to side of the shadow-thronged moonlit pavements for victims. So might Nero have looked on his way to the circus in a film.

The Tip Top Open Air Theatre and Café Concert could have been described in a guide book as the centre of the city's gay night life, though this distinction was

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due less to its superiority over rival places of entertainment than to its being the only place of entertainment of its kind that was tolerable in the heat of summer. The auditorium was large, bounded on either side by dense shrubberies, and the audience was divided into quantity and quality by a low fence. In front of this fence, seated at a number of circular iron tables were groups of people, who, in addition to paying the necessary entrance fee, were prepared to spend a little more on drinks. Behind them, on the other side of the barrier, a larger number of people who had paid a smaller entrance fee stood or roamed about, wondering what was being said on the golden stage. Behind them in turn a number of children and a few beggars who had paid no entrance fee at all clung to the railings outside the garden and to judge by their enthusiasm enjoyed the distant view of the stage and the faint echo of music more than anybody inside. The stage itself was arranged and equipped in the same way as it would have been in an ordinary theatre, with the usual florid proscenium. The entertainment consisted of variety turns interspersed with one-act plays nearly always in French. There were a few native performers, but even their songs were usually given in French like those of the rest of the performers, whatever their nationality. The male performers—jugglers, dancers, acrobats, and animal tamers led a miserable life, because, if they claimed to be French, the French Intelligence persecuted them as *insoumis*, serving them with orders to join the colours and threatening them with death or the Devil's Island if they did not immediately obey, and if they claimed any other nationality they were regarded as German spies to be badgered continually by energetic contre-espionage agents

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of the allied organizations. Nobody interfered on their behalf, because the local police thought that the persecution of theatrical vagabonds kept the French, English, Russian, and Serbian agents busy without upsetting the propaganda of the Germans, Austrians, Bulgarians, and Turks. The only neutral artist nobody attempted to interfere with was an American negro who danced night after night in a tall silk hat and tails, and cheered everybody up with the fancy that sooner or later the United States must enter the war. He was in the middle of his much admired sand step when Milton arrived at the Tip Top to-night. They were great friends. He had never let Milton stand him a drink since they met. So now when the negro perceived that tremendous entrance he took out of his pocket a small silk Stars and Stripes and waved it in greeting, still lisping with his agile feet on the sanded stage. Milton folded his arms and nodded gravely. He hoped that the audience recognized the significance of this salute by Columbia.

"Good evening, Jack," he rumbled, and then turned sharply to gratify his sense of what was owing to his importance by detecting signs of panic in the audience at the sound of that dreaded voice.

But an odd thing happened. Instead of the audience being thrown into a panic by Milton, one could have vowed that Milton had been frightened out of his own wits by the audience. And so he had by one member of it. He gripped the crook of his heavy stick with one hand and with the other he felt the reassuring bulges in his pockets to say that the pistols were still there. He wondered if the moonlight were making him look pale. He leaned more heavily upon his stick,

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because the fatigue of such hard work during this hot weather was making his legs wobble in a most extraordinary way. He really felt quite sick. Just when he needed all his powers too! Just when it was most important he should keep his presence of mind! Perhaps he had not yet been observed. Perhaps if he edged carefully away along the shrubbery . . . or was it possible to disappear altogether right into the shrubbery? He stepped gingerly rearward a pace or two, but his back encountered the resilient opposition of twigs. The shrubbery was too thick at this point. Last night he had been met by Adèle at the entrance, and had been informed that the German officer was sitting right in front just under the stage with Queenie at his table. That information had seemed to him so important that he had gone home immediately to make a note of it. He had made Adèle promise to let him know if the German went home to the Pension with Queenie. And she had assured him that he had not. He had not hesitated to make an appointment with that waiter at the Hotel des Etrangers to let him know whatever there was to be known about this German officer's movements. He had risked his life in a way that nobody else serving the Skipper would have thought of doing. And now there was the German officer himself actually within five yards of him. There he was in the ready-made cream-coloured poplin suit he had gone out to buy on the morning of his arrival in order to cope with the heat. There was that upturned fair moustache. There was that florid complexion. There was that scar over the left cheek-bone. There he was in the flesh. Of course, he had never for a moment fancied that the German officer was a myth. Still the idea of ever meeting

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him almost face to face like this would have seemed utterly fantastic. Had Adèle betrayed him? Was this a plot? Well, if it was, he would sell his life dearly. 'Tell the Skipper that Milton died game. I forgive you, Adèle. You were tempted, my girl. Tell the Skipper I'm sorry I didn't get the Hun for him. Tell him old Milton did his best. But the bastard shot him through the lungs from under the table.'

At this moment loud applause greeted the finale of the American negro's sand dance, and Milton, taking advantage of his enemy's pre-occupation with the stage, turned round and regardless of scratches and whipping twigs plunged into the heart of the screen of shrubs and trampled his way through into the path on the other side that led to the stage door, exactly like a frightened pachyderm plunging through the jungle. "Gor, what an escape!" he breathed heavily. He stooped to peer back into the auditorium through the shrubs. There was no sign of pursuit, and at that moment the orchestra struck up the melody that always heralded the appearance of Queenie on the golden stage. "Lucky for that swine I'm British," Milton muttered to himself. "He knows I wouldn't shoot him from behind a bush, the dirty dog." And gradually there was implanted in him a conviction that he had discovered the finest place in the whole of the theatre grounds from which to keep his tremendous eye upon the movements of the German officer. Why, if any of the girls did happen to pass this way she would almost faint when she saw that crouching figure. '*Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça? Ah, mon dieu, c'est Monsieur Milton. Ah, quel homme supérieur! Il me fait peur, cet homme.*'

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Meanwhile, Major Ernst von Rangel completely unconscious of those grim eyes watching him on the other side of the belt of shrubs was hammering with his glass tankard of washy beer on the iron table a welcome to Queenie's appearance on the stage. That she was singing in English a song about 'A little bit of string,' which was 'such a tiny little thing,' did not disturb his patriotism. He liked that breathless child's voice whatever it sang, and he liked even more those long slim legs and baby face and pale golden hair. The envoy from Berlin was enjoying his brief visit to the warm South. An Englishman might have hesitated to appear in public wearing that reach-me-down suit of poplin, or if he had ventured forth in it at night he would certainly not have called attention to himself by banging on the table with a glass tankard and shouting "Bravo! Bis! Bis!" in that rasping voice. But Major von Rangel perceived nothing to criticize in these clothes. This suit he had bought for sixty francs on the morning of his arrival was, in his opinion, a remarkably good fit and hardly distinguishable from the suit which he had had made to measure in Berlin, and in which he had roamed along the north-east frontier of Italy in the June of 1914. He only hoped that he should be able to squeeze it into his suitcase and not have to leave it behind him when he went back. What a state of nerves these diplomatic fellows worked themselves up into! They had been quite annoyed with him at the Legation for taking the opportunity to amuse himself a little while he was here, talked to him quite seriously about the risk he ran of being kidnapped. That was the way people did talk who were living safely outside the war zone. They wanted to think that their lives were

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as much exposed to danger as those of the combatants. They wanted to impress him. But when he reached Berlin again he should make it pretty clear in certain exalted circles that they were leading a life of luxury down here and did not deserve a moment's consideration. If this country stayed neutral, as by his visit to the King to-morrow he hoped to secure for some time to come, why, the post of military attaché here would not be unenviable. He might try for it himself presently. Next winter, for instance, it would be good to get a little sunshine, and if that pretty little fair girl were still here . . .

Queenie had finished her songs ; and now the orchestra was striking up the music for her dance.

It was not a first-class display. It was the kind of dancing that may be seen in any pantomime on tour. It was the kind of dancing that is called gymnastic. She kicked very high first with one leg and then with the other. She threw her head very far back, displaying her supple form. She pulled up her short fluffy skirts a few inches higher with one hand and went prancing round the stage waving the other. She was too eager and energetic to succeed in being graceful all the time ; but her long slim legs were so attractive, and she gave such an impression of fragile youth and ethereal fairness that every evening when she brought her dance to an end by doing the splits and sustaining with smiles at the audience her final pose she received the biggest ovation of the night. Who was she ? What was she ? Nobody knew. She had been blown here by the north wind. English ? Perhaps. German ? Just as probably. Scandinavian ? That was possible. How long would she stay here ?

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Nobody knew. Whither would she go from here? Nobody knew. The French girls eyed this incomprehensible wraith of womanhood with the sharp narrowing glances of their hypersophisticated femininity, which was always compelling them to realize, though they might not admit it, her infinite ability to attract men. It was a rule of the game that men should always be lured by this blonde girlishness. Its force was acknowledged when they plunged their own hair into peroxide of hydrogen. But they could not plunge their own dark bitter eyes into any chemical that would give them the clear girlish look that Queenie's had, nor paint from their lips the hard lines of accomplishment to give them the crushed virginal softness of Queenie's. Knowing that she had been drifting since childhood down a stream not less muddy than that which had defiled most of them they vowed that this innocent air must hide something, since she never seemed inclined to exploit her attractiveness to the extent she might have. Her apparent indifference to the money she could have made was in her position incredible. She must be playing an elaborate part. She must in fact be a spy. But one or two defended her. They said she was mad, well, perhaps not exactly mad, but a simpleton.

There had been a row in the dressing-room to-night. The girls had taunted Queenie with the attentions of the *sale boche*. Let her deny now if she could that she was *une espionne infecte*. If his attentions had been genuine, why had she not taken him home with her?

"*Parce que je suis Anglaise. Je ne veux pas coucher avec un boche,*" Queenie had screamed out shrilly, but with an almost inhuman rarified passion that the others found extremely diverting.

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"Ta gueule ! Tu n'es pas Anglaise ! Tu parles français comme une boche," one of the girls had taunted her.

Queenie had flung her pot of lip-salve at this girl, who had ducked her head with a yell of mocking laughter. And the lip-salve on the plaster wall of the dressing-room looked like a clot of blood. But as soon as it was her turn to take the stage her fury had died away. She enjoyed dancing to that audience. Their enthusiasm restored her belief that she really was what she wanted to be—an English dancing-girl. When she sat on the stage with each of her slim legs at right angles to her slim supple body sustaining her pose, while the audience cheered and applauded, she was laughing away to herself like an embarrassed but happy child. And when the curtain had fallen she rushed off the stage in a tumult of penitence to tell the girl at whom she had flung the lip-salve how sorry she was. And she was so radiant in her goodwill that the surly Portuguese, who was on his way to the stage with a dozen green parrots to bring the entertainment to an end with his juggling act, did not curse her for sweeping two of the parrots from his shoulder in a panic of shrieks when she passed him on her way to the dressing-room. In fact he even smiled, the muscles rippling under his silk fleshings as he stooped to recapture the waddling, agitated birds.

But it was not only the success she had enjoyed with the audience that was making Queenie so happy to-night. It was the thought that the most wonderful man in the world was perhaps by now on his way to her kisses, was perhaps at this very moment already waiting for her at the Pension in her room. She had told old Mère Bonbon that if he arrived before she got back from the Tip Top

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she was to take him up to her room. She had even entrusted Mère Bonbon with the key, though everybody knew the owner of the pension was an old thief and not to be trusted. But what matter? Better to lose a few odds and ends of jewellery than to keep him waiting outside an instant. He was so particular about not being seen by the other girls. The most wonderful man in the world! She had always enjoyed listening to girls talking about their *amants de cœur*. It had always sounded wonderful, and now she knew what it was like. Something so different! Something so new! And he would be with her to-night.

And at this moment Arthur Radcliffe was saying good-bye to the Davenports, telling them what a jolly evening he had had and how sorry he was that he could not stay the night, but that with the messenger arriving in the morning he felt that he must get back and that really he did not like to leave Georgie alone in the hotel. Oh, of course, he would bring her next time. She would have come this evening if it had not been for the show at the Legation to-morrow. "Good night! Good night!"

A few minutes later he was driving slowly through the pine-scented moonlight back toward the city, driving slowly and lazily, because he did not want to stir up the white dust and because it was no use getting to the Pension before two o'clock and because he wanted to think.

There was plenty to think about. It was no use trying to keep it secret from Georgie that he had not stayed the night with the Davenports. Mrs Davenport would be bound to say something about his leaving them after dinner. The best thing to say would be that he had

broken down and been hung up till daylight before he could find out what was wrong. He could get back to the hotel about seven o'clock. Yes, that excuse would do once, but what about next time? Things could not go on like this. He could not expect to keep his liaison with Queenie a secret much longer. And if it became a public scandal it would mean leaving this post. That was inevitable. Sir Frederic would not tolerate him here for a day if it became a scandal. And that would mean giving up Queenie. Better, therefore, to give her up before it did become a scandal. But how could he give her up if she remained here? He might succeed for a week or two, but the consciousness of the life she was leading would send him mad unless he went back to her and interfered with that life by demanding all of her for his own life. He was tormented by jealousy now, even though he believed absolutely that since he had known her she had been faithful to him. But what a little time he had known her! A fortnight's fidelity was not much in a life like hers. Why had he ever gone to that infernal open air theatre? It had been a blow by fate. He had not let himself drift into this passion. He had loved her from the first moment he spoke to her, and she had loved him. It had been obvious even to Vane-Howard. "I wish I could get such glances for the price of two bottles of champagne," Vane-Howard had laughed. "For the grave married man the victory, for me, the frivolous bachelor, the sting. She wouldn't look at me." And he had offered—had it been with a smirk?—to resign in favour of Vane-Howard. "These places bore me," he had told him lackadaisically. "And me," Vane-Howard had agreed, "when I find myself so obviously pushed into

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a position of such complete insignificance as this evening." And then two nights later after seeing nothing but that pale gold hair hovering about his desk in the Chancery he had gone up to the Tip Top very late and had sent the waiter across to bid her come to his table in the shadow of the big tree. He had driven her home. She had been all that his fancy had promised him. And since then whenever he could find an opportunity he had slipped away from the cold correct world in which he was born to her. Madness! Madness! Not that he cared about his wife. She was capable of amusing herself, Georgie was. But that cold correct world was too substantial. He could slip away from it sometimes, but he could not destroy its solidity, and so long as it stood there cold and correct and solid he should never have the courage to ignore it. If sometimes he protested against Georgie's indiscretion it was not out of jealousy, heaven knew. It was the fear of being laughed at in that cold and correct and damnably substantial world. If he had fallen in love with somebody else, it was Georgie's own fault. She had done the most unforgivable thing that a woman can do. She had made his attempts at love-making a self-conscious agony by her obvious repulsion. And then suddenly with an inspiration of cruelty she had seemed to yield completely, and he still self-conscious had . . .

In the memory of his humiliation he nearly let the car swerve off the road into the ditch. The damnable ingenuity of her! No, if it were only a question of Georgie's future, he should not be bothering about Queenie. But if there were a divorce, Georgie would work things in such a way that he would appear in the eyes of his world a weakling and a fool. He could not face that, even for

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Queenie. He must bring it all to an end. He must tell her to-night it was impossible for him to go on visiting her. Yes, it was easy in this moonlight to say that. Those rolling pine-woods, those dim blue mountains beyond, that brilliant and imperturbable moon, this lonely white road curling before his lazy wheels made love's fever seem a poor weakness of man easily cured. And if he could drive on for ever like this, dreaming of Queenie, why, that would be easy too, because she would for ever seem to be somewhere in the moonlight beyond. In such lazy silvery romantic progress Queenie's dark and unsubstantial world ceased to be credible. But in the lonely airless afternoons, and in the lamplit empty nights should he not always be seeing her in that room with somebody else? Break it off? Yes, that somehow must be achieved. But he must send her beyond his reach. She had often talked to him of her longing to go to England. To England he must get her. Out of his reach. Out of his sight. Out of his fancy. He would talk to her about it to-night. She would not reproach him. She loved him. He might take Roger Waterlow into his confidence. The old pirate might understand and help him. He did not live in that cold and correct and substantial world ; but he knew what it was like. How was the time going? Half-past twelve. Another twenty miles of pine-trees and moonlight ; and then that pale golden hair loosened for him and those twining arms about his neck and that drifting sweetness of her like the drifting sweetness of this warm moony air. Ah, why had he not been born a creature in tights and spangles in Queenie's own irresponsible world?

But back there in the theatre at this moment Queenie was having to face the duties of that irresponsible world.

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It, too, had its own rigid conventions, one of which was that the actresses at the Tip Top Theatre should sit for a while and drink champagne with wealthy loiterers who desired their company, whatever wonderful lovers might be whirring nearer and nearer in automobiles through moonlight pine-scented.

"Come here, my little girl, and sit with me," Major von Rangel had invited. "I want you to drink my health."

Milton still crouching on the gravel path was noting down in his pocket-book the details of this important communication.

"*Mais, chéri, qu'est-ce que tu fais là ?*" Adèle asked when she came upon her lover peering through the shrubs at the bottle-loaded table of the German officer.

He made a tremendous gesture to command her silence.

"Can't you see I'm staying here because I'm in danger?" he grumbled indignantly. He tapped his chest. "I'm the man," he proclaimed. "If they knew I was here . . ." he broke off with another tremendous gesture to express the completeness of his annihilation, if they did.

Other agents less cautious than Milton had edged their chairs nearer to the table where the German officer was pouring out champagne for Qucenic, who had looked round her several times as if to implore some of the girls to join her and, if they would, to pocket the commission on this lavish ordering of wine. But they, envious though they were of that commission, merely chattered away in critical disgust of a girl who could sit drinking with a *sale boche*, and thereby smirch the honour of the Tip Top's company. It was hypocrisy for her to pretend that the manager had insisted on it. Let the manager try to make

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them sit drinking the champagne of a *sale boche*. They would know what to tell him.

With the fall of the curtain and the departure of the orchestra the garden took on a sadness. The isolated groups which were all that remained of the audience seemed like a life left stranded by the tide. They seemed to be sitting here drinking and chattering not because they enjoyed it, but because they were too tired to go away. The brilliant moonlight gave a cadaverous look to the painted faces of the girls, darkening the carmine and lending the powder a horrible thickness like paste. Even so on the drop-curtain of the dim theatre the nymphs that blushed with a semblance of vitality in the warmth of the footlights were turned by this contemptuous moon to crudely smeared caricatures. The watchful agents need not have bothered to edge their chairs a little closer to the German officer. After he had drunk a whole bottle of champagne he was talking at the top of his voice in such execrable French, that half the agents noted for information at their bureaus to-morrow that he was talking in German. As for Queenie, she whispered no more than breathless affirmatives and negatives, looking round her continually to implore relief from these bottles of champagne standing thick as skittles. The German officer rasped out a long explanation of just what it was in Queenie that appealed to his manhood, at the end of which he leaned heavily towards her and tried to pull her down on his knee. She struggled away from him. Two or three bottles were knocked over and lay spuming out their effervescence on the bare ground. He shouted to the waiter :

“ *Garçon, encore du champagne. Encore! Encore!* ”

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And the waiter, who also received a commission, could not help smiling. It was rash of him. There was not an agent watching who did not report him as a fierce pro-German the next day. That profiteering smile was to keep him from attending his father's death-bed in Alexandria six months hence. He was not a man to whom a visé could be granted without endangering the ultimate triumph of the allied cause.

Queenie at last took advantage of her suitor's pre-occupation with a fresh supply of champagne to break away from him. He asked her where she was going. She told him that she was tired and going home. He vowed he was coming with her. She called back over her shoulder to declare it would be useless, and then suddenly turning round she ran as fast as she could toward the entrance. Luckily, there was an automobile waiting in the road outside on the chance of a fare back. She jumped in, panting.

"*Je viens chez toi. Je viens chez toi,*" the suitor was shouting back there in the garden; but she safe in the automobile laughed to herself. In perhaps a few minutes now she should be with Arthur. The automobile tore back to the heart of the city, its wheels skidding from time to time in the tram-lines, its exhaust clattering like a machine-gun.

It was the way Queenie had gone off last night, Adèle told Milton. He put a finger to his lips, tapped her shoulder, and led the way toward the entrance. Then he beckoned to a carriage. A queer couple they looked, driving back together in the moonlight—he nodding to himself in a gross abstraction of self-importance, she in a titubation of love beside him, her peaked face gazing up

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hungrily to his every other moment, and from time to time patting with dry feverish fingers the lanky peroxidized wisps of what had long ago ceased to have much resemblance to human hair. At last he seemed to remember abruptly that she was beside him and looked round at her. She clutched eagerly at his arm. The strength of him filled her with delicious tremors. She murmured some provocative endearment. She snuggled close to her master. She let him know she was his slave. It did not elate him unduly. Women were like that. He pushed her away. He did not require this flattery of his body. He wanted his mind to excite her wonder. He asked her what everybody said when he had appeared like that in the middle of Jack's dance and then disappeared immediately afterwards. Had they been frightened? She had not heard anybody say so. He frowned. He told her that if she could not pay more attention to her duty he should be compelled to finish with her at once. She tried to coax him ; but he withdrew into a sulky abstraction. She tried to woo him with some wanton liberty, and he threatened to pitch her out of the carriage if she could not behave herself. He told her that for him she was no more than a piece of dirt. Apparently this cheered her up, for she laid her head against his arm and sighed happily. The carriage jogged on through the moon-parched dust.

Back in the garden of the Tip Top Major von Rangel was still drinking champagne. The other agents had by now all gone home to bed, their pocket-books full of notes on his behaviour. There was nobody left except the waiter. The Major bade him sit down at his table and plied him with champagne. The waiter protested humbly

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his unworthiness to drink with such an important personage. The Major clumped him on the head with a bottle. The waiter crossed himself and drank. The Major clumped him on the head again. The waiter went on drinking. The leaves of the shrubs glittered like cut steel in the moonlight. The Major sang in German the aria from *Mignon* about the land where the oranges flower. The waiter crossed himself several times. The Major clumped him on the head again, this time with a full bottle, which knocked him nearly senseless. And then they went on drinking together in the deserted gardens.

Arthur Radcliffe had just put his car in the garage and was walking toward the Pension Bonbon. Queenie was in her room looking out through a chink in the curtains at the shining street. The carriage with Milton and Adèle reached the corner of it just as Arthur Radcliffe reached the door of the Pension. Milton told the driver to stop, and turned to Adèle with raised eyebrows.

"*Oui, c'est l'amant de Queenie,*" she whispered.

He grunted with satisfaction. That was Arthur Radcliffe (suspect) all right. This information was going to shake the Skipper to-morrow. He had not liked to be warned of treachery at the Legation. Still, duty was duty. He turned to Adèle and asked her if she realized that nobody in this city could hide anything from him. She told him that many had commented to her on that. Arthur Radcliffe had disappeared into the dark Pension by now, but Milton's vanity had been roused by Adèle's last remark. He longed to give an ocular demonstration of the terror his ubiquitous presence inspired. He told her that before they went back to Mère Bonbon's he must have a drink. The paying off

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of the driver took some time, because Milton had to examine every piece of small silver in his pocket before he came to the conclusion that he could not provide the exact combination required for the fare, and in the end it was Adèle who paid it.

There were only about a dozen scattered people sitting listlessly inside the big café down the boulevard. Milton led Adèle to a corner and bade the waiter bring two bocks. Then he told her to watch what happened. He marched ponderously out into the middle of the interior and stood among a thicket of empty chairs and tables eyeing every small group in turn. At last he perceived not far from one of the entrances an elderly gentleman reading an evening paper. He walked over in his direction and stood with folded arms, glaring down at him ferociously. The elderly gentleman bore it for a moment or two; but presently he became a little restless under this concentrated gaze. He beckoned to the waiter, paid for his cup of coffee, folded up his paper, and walked hastily out into the boulevard. Milton asked the waiter who he was. The waiter said he did not know, but that he often came in late like this. By now some of the people at the other tables were beginning to stare. Milton took out a pocket-book and made an entry. Then he shook his head, clicked his tongue, and walked back to Adèle. He asked her if she had seen the way that suspect had bolted out of the café.

"*Il avait peur?*" she asked.

Milton nodded gravely.

"*Tu es terrible, tu sais, mon grand homme,*" she declared fondly.

That was all he wanted. He paid for the bocks, and together they left the café.

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They walked slowly along in the blazing moonlight toward the Pension Bonbon. They reached the big front door with its grille like a convent's. Adèle's key fidgeted for a moment in the Yale lock. The big door swung open. The dim stale air within seemed to wind itself round them. The hanging red Moorish lantern in the hall, the closed doors and thick Turkey carpets along the corridors commanded the visitor to tread softly and speak in undertones. Not that there was any atmosphere here of surreptitious vice as there would have been in England—a feeling that so long as nothing was done to attract the attention of the police there was just a chance of not being raided for a few months. This was the atmosphere of a church diabolically inverted, where pleasure was worshipped and where some consideration was due to the devotions of other worshippers. Behind one of the many closed doors numbered as in an hotel a murmur of mingled voices flowed like the sound of a brook. "*La chambre de Queenie*," Adèle whispered. Milton nodded gravely. The next door was Adèle's own. Milton stood before the table and examined his reflection. He picked up the scent-spray and sprayed himself contemplatively. He opened the powder-box of sham silver in tawdry repoussé. There was a five-franc note inside. In the glass he could see Adèle bending over to unlace her high white kid boots. He slipped the note into his pocket.

At this moment a car turned the corner of the narrow street in which the Pension was situated, stopped outside and began to bray insistently, while simultaneously there was a loud knocking on the front door. Milton pulled out a pistol and dropped on one knee. "My god, who's

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that?" he demanded, pale and quaking. It was nothing, Adèle assured him. People often came to Mère Bonbon's in the night and knocked like this. Cursing her for a fool, he bade her peep behind the curtains and try to see who it was. "*Mais, mon dieu,*" she gasped. "*C'est le boche.*" The knocking became a bombardment. The horn of the car blared in triplets. "He shan't get me yet," Milton was muttering, his face livid. Then he ran crouching toward the door and listened. A voice was shouting outside in the street. Milton opened the door of the bedroom and ran along the passage, still crouching. At the head of the stairs he fired at the hanging Moorish lamp in the hall and smashed its electric bulb and red glass to pieces. He crawled back on hands and knees in the darkness to Adèle's room. Faint screams echoed everywhere. Doors opened all round. Voices demanded who it was and what it was. Windows were flung open. The late visitor was bade begone with objurgations. Milton squeezed himself under Adèle's bed, muttering to himself that he was caught like a rat in a trap and would die game. Mère Bonbon herself descended from some unimaginable bedroom, a squab toad-faced black-moustached monstrosity in a quilted black and yellow dressing-gown, preceded by Eugenia, the maid of all work, with a taper. Arrived at the front door she pulled back the slide of the grille and screamed abuse at the caller. "*Vous voulez Queenie, sale type?*" she raged. "*Allez-vous-en, vaurien que vous êtes!*" Adèle who had joined a couple of other girls at the head of the stairs went speeding back to reassure her lover. It was not him the *boche* wanted; it was Queenie. He laughed as sardonically as he could in his cramped position, and invited her

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not to be a stupid camel. "*Non, mais écoute, chéri, il s'en va,*" she called from the window. It was true. The automobile moved off. The silver street was quiet again. But the row indoors continued. Mère Bonbon was wanting to know who had broken her lamp. Milton extricated himself from under the bed. He was himself again, with nothing to show the crisis through which he had passed except two or three pieces of grey fluff sticking to his hair and a good deal of dust on his coat and trousers. "Leave the old woman to me," he muttered grimly. He marched with mighty tread towards the flickering taper-light in the hall and the moans of Mère Bonbon for her ruined lamp. It had been brought back to her from Algiers by the only man she had ever loved. It was a link with her sacred past at Marseilles. *Du reste*, there was not another lamp like it in this accursed country. If she could find the *voyou* who had broken it she would break him.

Milton came down the stairs with the relentlessness of fate. He silenced her with a gesture that seemed to cut like a scimitar through her chatter. Then he spoke a funeral oration for the broken lamp. Which was more important, he asked, his life or the lamp's? It had to be one or the other. And what was a lamp? She interrupted to proclaim its uniqueness. He cut her short again. "*À la guerre comme à la guerre!*" That applied as much to lamps as everything else nowadays. Then he concluded. "The Entente will pay for your lamp. *Assez!*"

An hour later Arthur Radcliffe slipped away from the Pension Bonbon, saying to himself that never again would he risk entering it. That appalling row in the street!

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And Queenie's name being shouted for everybody to hear! It had not been her fault. This kind of thing was inseparable from her life. And then the pistol shot! Why, the police might have broken in and arrested everybody in the place. That they had not done so was, indeed, a miracle of luck. No, never again! What an escape! Still, in one way the row had been a good thing. It had given him the courage to tell Queenie that he could not go on like this. And she had been very sweet about it. She had understood how impossible it was for him to set her up in an apartment of her own. What a mercy she had this passion to go to England!

The façade of the Grand Hotel du Monde rose before him bone-grey in the false dawn. The night porter's sleepy lack of surprise when he let him in was reassuring. He went upstairs with more confidence in his ability to carry off his tale. And after all it was a more plausible tale now, because he was back two or three hours earlier than he had expected to be.

While he was moving about quietly in the dressing-room he heard Georgie and saw the light flashed on.

"Who's that?"

He came to the door and apologized for waking her.

"You?"

"Yes, of course, who did you think it was? I decided I wouldn't stay the night with the Davenports after all, and then I had two punctures on the way back and was a deuce of a time with the second one."

"Oh, that's enough," she interrupted. "You needn't elaborate your lie."

He was taken aback. It had never really struck him that Georgie might not believe his tale.

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"Why should I lie?" he parried. He might as well try to find out if she had heard anything about Queenie, or if she merely suspected him on general grounds.

"Just the sort of sneaking rotten thing you would do. Oh god, how I despise you! How I hate you!"

"Georgie!"

"Perhaps you'd like to look under the bed?" she sneered. "And don't forget the wardrobe."

In a sudden relief he understood what she did think and laughed.

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It should be unnecessary to say that the King was an early riser. An ability to get up early in the morning is one of the virtues with which no fairy godmother ever fails to endow a royal infant. By nine o'clock he had been for an hour's ride with Captain Paul Drimys, his favourite A.D.C., had dictated a number of letters to his private secretary, had received the head of the secret police, had read a report of the previous day's underground activity among the French and English agents and the leaders of the political opposition, had discussed with the Chief of his General Staff an appreciation of the allied position at Salonica, and had eaten, surrounded by his family, an excellent breakfast. Sitting there in his plainly furnished study on this morning in the midway of the war, he showed no sign of any anxiety about the future; he was at this date still profoundly certain that the war would end if not in a sweeping victory for the Germans, at least in a draw in their favour. The many photographs in his study of female relatives all many years behind the fashion, of male relatives mostly in uniform and so less obviously out of date, were not more tranquil than he.

It is a tribute to the hardy discipline of the Prussian army that Major Ernst von Rangel was able to face this exalted presence at nine o'clock in the morning without the least suggestion of the night before. Nobody who had

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seen that rigid soldierly figure click its heels on entering the King's study could have believed that it was the same figure which, wrapped in a ready-made suit of cream-coloured poplin, had been drinking champagne the night before in the gardens of the Tip Top Theatre or more incredibly had been banging at the door of a *pension d'artistes* scarcely six hours earlier. Nobody who had heard his lucid, at times even eloquent statement of the military position of the Central Powers, with its nice appreciation of their superiority on all possible battle fronts, could have believed that his last appreciation had been of the physical charms of a cabaret dancer.

"And if Roumania should come in against you?" the King asked in German.

The Major begged his Majesty's pardon; but he really could not help smiling at such a notion. That after the experience of Belgium another minor power should venture to attack Germany was inconceivable; but if under influence Roumania did anything rash the punishment would have to be made even more terrible in order to deter others. There was a silence. The King looked at a large photograph of the Kaiser signed with what for so fierce a figure was really a ridiculous diminutive. Major Ernst von Rangel looked straight in front of him.

"I am much indebted to you, Major von Rangel, for your clear—your very clear explanation of the military position."

The Major clicked his heels and bowed low.

"Your Majesty pays me too high a compliment. I have not had the great honour of being able to explain *anything* to a general who is already world-famous as a strategist of the first order. The glorious German army

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is already proud to remember that your Majesty is one of its Field-Marshal, and its only regret is that such a renowned soldier is at present unhappily debarred from leading it on the field of action."

"I have never pretended to hide that whatever I have learnt of the military art I have learnt in Germany," said the King modestly.

"Your Majesty's loyalty in most difficult circumstances is inscribed on the hearts of the German people."

"But do not let it be supposed for a moment," said the King, hastily recovering himself from a flattering memory of his impressive appearance in the uniform of a German Field-Marshal, in which, when it first arrived from Berlin, he had spent an hour before the glass, practising martial and kingly poses with his baton, "do not let it be supposed that there is the remotest possibility of my taking an active part in this war on either side. The only policy for this little country is neutrality. You say they talk in Berlin of making the submarine warfare more intensive?"

"We anticipate that by the middle of next year the Mediterranean will have been closed to the English fleet."

"I do not feel so convinced of that. I have a high opinion of the British Navy."

The A.D.C. came into the room at this point and said something to the King in a low voice.

"I had not forgotten, Drimys. There are still ten minutes." Then he turned to his visitor. "Major von Rangel, I have not yet decided whether I shall entrust any written communications to your good care. To be frank, I am informed there is always a risk of such communications being intercepted. I understand you are to

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be taken off by a submarine very early to-morrow instead of the day after to-morrow? ”

Major von Rangel evidently did not know this.

“ You did not visit your Legation again after dinner last night? ” the King asked with a twinkle in his eyes. “ No, quite so, there was no reason to do so; but I received from your Minister last night an urgent request that I would give orders to facilitate your earlier departure. So, I have arranged that the road to Miramara will be closed to traffic to-night. Should I decide after all to entrust you with any personal letters, Captain Drimys will hand them to you as soon as the submarine is sighted. One never knows when a submarine will reach its destination in these days. However, Captain Drimys himself will explain to you the details of the few little precautions we have been able to take here for your safety. Good-bye, Major von Rangel, I hope you will reach Pola safely. I believe that the Queen wishes to speak to you for a few minutes before you leave the Palace.”

“ Her Majesty is too kind.”

With much bowing and clicking of heels Major Ernst von Rangel retired from the presence.

Five minutes later the A.D.C. ushered in Colonel Buckworth, the British Military Attaché.

“ Ah, my dear Colonel,” said the King in the language which was most natural to him, all his charm radiating. “ How glad I am to see you! Now, I can really talk. Come along and sit down. Why don’t you come and see me oftener? I’m only myself when I am in the company of brother officers. These bloody politicians and diplomats drive me mad.”

“ I expect they are a bit trying, Sir.”

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"Well, you see, I look at things from a soldier's point of view," said the King.

"And who has a better right than your Majesty?" demanded the Colonel pompously. He was a heavy man with square fleshy jowl and rugged nose, more like a German than an English officer even in his khaki uniform, which was not surprising since he was in fact German on his mother's side.

"Well, I certainly did flatter myself that I knew something about soldiering until my plan for straddling the Gallipoli peninsula was returned by your people with an intimation that they had a better."

Indignation empurpled the Colonel's face to the hue of the ribbon of a Belgian order on his breast.

"I can't speak of that folly, Sir," he choked. "Unfortunately I wasn't out here then. I was with my battery." He omitted to add that after such a long absence from the sound and sight of guns in diplomatic and other posts it had been considered safer for his own side to return him as quickly as possible to diplomacy.

"Yes," said the King, "I might have been some amateur strategist writing to *The Times*."

"Ah, it was a bad business, Sir, a bad business. And Salonica is not much better."

"Yet you expect me to put all my eggs in that broken basket. Come, Colonel, do you mean seriously to tell me that I should be justified in entrusting my Army to the vanity and incompetence of a fellow like Sarraïl? Why, I should be a criminal."

Colonel Buckworth was silent.

"If a British General were in command, it might be different; though, mind you, I don't say that it would.

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I won't commit myself as far as that. But even if British Generals are gentlemen first and generals second, they are at any rate gentlemen. And that makes it possible to deal with them. Well, look at us two now. I couldn't talk like this to a Frenchman. He belongs to another world, another universe. Good god, why, yesterday I gave an audience to Lolivrel, the French Minister, and upon my word he scolded me like an old market woman who thinks she's been given a bad franc. Come, come, Colonel, admit that you find your French colleague, little What's-his-name, a little trying."

"I think he does his best, Sir," said the Colonel stiffly.

He agreed in his heart entirely with what the King was saying, and it was very difficult not to agree with him openly. His experience in Paris as Military Attaché before the war, which had culminated in their giving him a wall-eyed horse at the big review and then showing him mounted on it in a film close-up so that the audience had shouted with mirth every night, had made a racial prejudice against the French, which had always been strong, almost rabid.

"However, considering the strength of the Germans," said the King, "I'm bound to admit they are making a better fight than I expected."

"And, of course, every month sees us stronger, Sir," the Colonel reminded him.

"Ah, yes, I know that," the King replied with a smile. "But never strong enough to beat the Germans."

"It will take time, of course, Sir. But we shall do it. My own idea is that 1920 may see the beginning of the end."

"It may see a draw, but 1920 won't see a victory over the Germans. And if you fritter away your strength on

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a few more side-shows like this international circus at Salonica I'm damned if you'll see even a draw. You'll have been beaten before then."

"If I may venture to say so, your Majesty is too pessimistic."

"Say what you like, my dear fellow. You and I are old soldiers. We can talk freely. I'm frightened of what the Germans will do presently with their U-boats. You know as well as I do that, though I respect the Germans as a military power, I'm every bit as anxious for them to be beaten as you are. But can you do it? I say, 'never.' And believing that, I refuse to drag my country into disaster."

The conversation became technical. Maps were unrolled. Flags were pushed about. Colonel Buckworth leaned over the King's table, his face the colour now of the Legion of Honour upon his breast and as full of creases as the rosette in the middle of it. The King, with the information brought him by Major von Rangel, had the better of the argument. Colonel Buckworth could not manage to break the German line at any point.

"But even if there were any doubt of the ultimate issue," said the King finally, "are you going the right way to make me declare war on your side? Do you think that by filling my capital with spies and such riff-raff you are going to frighten me out of my neutrality? What's this fellow Waterlow doing here rushing about in a motor car from morning to night like a Sherlock Holmes *à la manque*?"

"I deprecate that kind of thing, Sir. I deprecate it very much. In fact, I may say that I have written strongly on this very subject to the War Office. I have

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a horror of Intelligence. I've been in the army for thirty-five years, and I never knew any good come out of Intelligence yet, though sometimes there's a ludicrous side to it." He chuckled to himself pompously. "I may add that just before leaving the Legation to have the honour of being received by your Majesty I was informed that my predecessor would be a German officer recently arrived from Berlin. I laughed. I am bound to say that in spite of the impudence of it I laughed heartily."

The King joined merrily in the laugh for a few moments; then he became abruptly serious.

"All the same, Colonel," he said, "this kind of malicious tittle-tattle is more than a little irritating. No doubt, Ovenden will be telegraphing to London that I am in constant communication with Berlin, and no doubt some fresh humiliation will be devised to punish me. Damn it, I sometimes ask myself if I am a King or not. Mind you, I don't want to quarrel with England. After all, the war will come to an end one day, whatever the ultimate result may be. And I do enjoy visiting England better than any country in the world. But how can I ever visit again a country whose Press never mentions me without abuse or ridicule?"

"The Press, Sir, is the curse of modern life," said Colonel Buckworth sententiously. "If we hadn't had a set of shilly-shallying political adventurers in control of affairs, the Press would have been abolished on the day war was declared. However, I don't think that this latest *canard* will fly far, Sir. Should I find Sir Frederic has accepted such a farcical tale I shall with your Majesty's permission contradict it authoritatively."

"No, no, don't bother to do that," said the King

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quickly. "I obviously have a perfect right to receive any German officer who visits my capital. What I object to is the construction that is put on it. And these cursed diplomats never try to find out for themselves my real point of view. Ovenden never comes to see me," the King went on fretfully. "I'm treated by the representatives of the Entente like a pariah. They fill my capital with low spies and *agents provocateurs*. They lecture me and bully me and shadow me at every opportunity. And why? Because I put the good of my country before anything else."

"Have I your Majesty's permission to point out to Sir Frederic what must be the effect of such a policy of pin-pricks?"

"You can point out anything you damn well like, my dear Colonel, but as a soldier you know as well as I do that it will have no effect upon a diplomat. Besides, France leads England by the nose out here."

Colonel Buckworth frowned.

"I admit that such may be the impression, Sir. And I admit that our Foreign Office is quite incapable of formulating any kind of policy for itself. But the power of the Foreign Office as the war goes on is getting steadily more and more curtailed. It is beginning to be realized that as soon as a country is in a state of war diplomacy automatically ceases to function. The Army is under no illusions, Sir. The Army intends to carry this war through to the bitter end. The Army regards everything and everybody that does not contribute directly to the business in hand as an excrescence. And the Army considers that the only business in hand is the killing of Germans."

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"Quite rightly," the King agreed. "But the question is whether the British Army is not too late in the field. Can your soldiers kill enough Germans before the Germans have killed too many of them? England embarked on this war with a tradition that Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton. Germany, however, was convinced that Waterloo was won on the parade grounds of Potsdam. And so far it looks as if Germany was right. But I don't have to convince *you* of Germany's strength."

"Indeed, no, Sir. Still I believe we shall beat them, provided the Army is given a free hand, for it must be remembered that the Army is not only hampered by politicians and diplomats; it has to contend also with the Navy."

"A bit of a disappointment, the Navy, eh?"

Colonel Buckworth shook his head.

"I should prefer not to criticize the Navy, Sir," he said pompously. "And matters are improving. So long as Winston was at the Admiralty it was impossible to feel any confidence in the Navy. But things are improving now. We hear no more talk of these fatuous amphibian expeditions."

The King rose.

"Well, Colonel, I've enjoyed our old soldier's yarn."

The Military Attaché bowed his humble gratitude.

"And I'm sorry I couldn't keep that German officer here for you to kill this morning, eh?"

The Military Attaché laughed with vigorous politeness at the royal joke.

"There is one more ribbon I should like to see there," said the King, eyeing the rich polychrome of decorations

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on the Colonel's chest. "But I suppose I mustn't send you the cordon of my Wooden Horse?"

The Colonel bowed.

"I fear that such a signal distinction is impossible at present, Sir."

"Well, well, I must hope that it is only a pleasure deferred."

"Your Majesty has greatly touched me by such kindness. I did not anticipate such an extreme mark of your Majesty's favour. I am really quite overwhelmed by it."

The King tapped him graciously on the shoulder.

"One of the few pleasures left to me, my dear Colonel, is to show my esteem and regard for honest men. Even such a harmless pleasure is in your case denied to me." The King sighed deeply. "But we must hope for happier days. Come and see me again soon. Perhaps another of these German officers will have paid me a visit by then, and I shall be able to give you some news from Berlin, eh? But if I can't give you my Wooden Horse, I can at least offer you a cigar."

And with this fragrant but fugitive mark of royal favour Colonel Buckworth bowed himself out of the presence.

At the gates of the Palace the picturesque sentry presented arms.

"But where the devil is my car?" Colonel Buckworth asked.

The A.D.C. who had escorted the Colonel so far enquired of the sentry.

"It apparently drove away, *mon colonel*, after bringing you here."

"What confounded impudence," the Colonel growled.

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It was true the chauffeur had explained to him on arriving at the Palace that Commander Waterlow wanted him back at once, but he had made it perfectly clear he expected him to wait. The Colonel boiled to a crustacean red. "He couldn't have understood me," he muttered angrily. "Well, I won't keep you, Captain Drimys. Au revoir."

"We meet to-night, I think," said the A.D.C.

"Plaisir! Plaisir!" growled the Colonel as he set out to walk along the dusty glare of the streets until he found a hackney coach. The presence of Waterlow with a car of his own seemed more than ever an outrage upon the neutrality of a friendly nation. As he marched puffing along toward the Legation he began to compose a letter to the Director of Military Intelligence, in which he made it perfectly clear that the sooner this fellow was recalled the better it would be for the political situation. *I may add that the King spoke to me very strongly about the way Lieutenant-Commander Waterlow goes driving about the city in this motor car which he has somehow managed to appropriate for his own use. Should it be decided to recall him, it might be advisable to put this car at the disposition of the Military Attaché. With regard to what I said in my last letter about the advantages of a higher rank I may mention that the Italian Military Attaché has now been promoted. With a French and Italian colleague of superior rank I find my position here most invidious. Moreover, the rank of full Colonel is not differentiated in the non-military mind from that of Lieutenant-Colonel. They are, in fact, indistinguishable. Perhaps you would point this out in the proper quarter.*

And then noticing a disengaged carriage at last he

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climbed in and leaned back against the warm cushions, panting indignantly.

Meanwhile, the Admiralty Messenger had arrived at the Legation. Just as Colonel Buckworth left the gates of the Palace he had driven up in his car and entered the cool marble hall carrying a small but very heavily weighted canvas sack tied up with string and leaden seals, and with a label addressed to H.B.M.'s Minister crossed in ink. Behind him a round-faced Marine stumbled up the steps with two large bulging canvas sacks tied up and addressed like the other, but without crosses on their labels.

Scrutton greeted him cordially.

"Very hot again this morning, sir."

"Hot?" ejaculated Lieut. - Commander Hunter, R.N.V.R., who, in spite of his white uniform, certainly looked it. "Jove, I should say it was hot. The road up from the harbour nearly melted the tyres. Wilson's feeling the heat a bit too."

The round-faced Marine accepted this remark as an indication that he might deposit on the floor the bags he was carrying. Scrutton murmured in a confidential voice that he would look after Wilson when he was free, and the round-faced Marine grinned hopefully.

"Shall I carry your bag to the Chancery, sir?" he offered.

The Messenger looked shocked.

"No, no, don't bother. It's a crossed bag, Scrutton. I always make it a rule never to let a crossed bag out of my own hands till I've had my way-bill checked."

Although Lieut. - Commander Hunter, R.N.V.R., had for over a year now been making the fortnightly

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journey from one Naval base to another, he was still acutely aware of his romantic post. In real life this burly clean-shaven man of about thirty-four was a fashionable stockbroker, and the somewhat excessively nautical air he affected was a desire to insist on his pre-war fame at Burnham-on-Crouch and his position as Rear-Commodore of one of the less important yacht clubs. He wanted it to be clear that he had been in the R.N.V.R. before the war and that his job as Messenger had nothing to do with any influence he might possess in high places. Jealous people were always ready to sneer, and though Lieut.-Commander Hunter never lost an opportunity of pointing out what a dangerous job his was, he could not pretend that it was not at the same time rather a pleasant one. Admirals and Ambassadors gave him good dinners for the sake of his gossip. Ladies gave him brilliant glances (and sometimes a good deal more) for the sake of his reservations in the wagon-lits. The least he could do for his country was never to let a crossed bag out of his sight.

"Beg pardon, sir," Scrutton apologized, "I was forgetting how particular you always was. So's Lord Wiltshire, sir, the War Office Messenger. In fact, the last time he passed through, and I went to take his bag he was so upset he dropped it on his foot and swore for about five minutes without a breath. Did you come on the *Coppelia*, sir, as usual?"

The Messenger winced slightly.

"In the *Coppelia*, yes."

At this moment Charles Amberley appeared at the head of the corridor leading to the Chancery.

"Hullo, Admiral," he exclaimed in his pleasant,

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elaborate voice. "How splendid! I say have you brought my shoes from Peel's?"

Not only those, but a pair of boots they had insisted on handing him as well, Hunter revealed.

"Oh, sound fellah! Come along, bring the bags into the Chancery and we'll loot them. Oh, I say, and did you bring me that extra large shaving-brush I wanted?"

"I bought you the largest in London. You could whitewash the Legation with it."

"No, really, Admiral? How splendid! What? Come along in, and I'll check your way-bill. You've got a crossed bag there, haven't you?"

"Have I not?"

They were in one of the small rooms of the Chancery now. The shelves were crammed with box files, and one asked oneself if ever again in this new world of war any of those pseudo-volumes with faded dates on their dusty backs would be taken down and consulted. The strenuousness of contemporary diplomatic work made them seem still more remote from the present. They belonged to a time whose precedents so carefully garnered had been scattered to the winds. And these beautifully dressed young men who were gathering round the bags, would all the records of their feverish clerical activity look as dusty and derelict in another twenty years?

"My gad," Vane-Howard exclaimed, lifting the confidential bag and dropping it with a bump on the Chancery table. "They've put more lead in than ever. See any submarines, Admiral?"

"No such luck. We had a periscope scare about five hours out from Malta. But as usual it was something

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else. Last time it was the leg of a dead horse. This time it was a Bath Oliver biscuit tin."

While he was speaking Arthur Radcliffe had been foraging in one of the bags.

"I was trying to find if you'd got me those tennis balls, Admiral. I don't seem to get hold of the right shape of parcel."

"They're in there. Three dozen."

"Oh, thank God," Arthur sighed.

"Do I hear you thanking God for tennis balls in this appalling heat?" Vane-Howard drawled. "What a rollicking lad you are!"

"They're not for me," said Arthur. "I promised to get them for Prince Basil."

Amberley was sorting out packets of letters. Among them there were four or five large envelopes covered with seals and addressed to W.

"Has Captain Kidd been in this morning?" he asked. "There's a mass of villainy for him to attend to here."

A feminine voice from the corridor called "Arthur!" The Third Secretary frowned and went out into the corridor to find his wife anxious to know if the Messenger had brought her bathing-dresses from Debenham's.

"I really haven't asked him," said Arthur irritably. "And look here, Georgie, I wish you wouldn't come round to the Chancery like this. Sir Frederic hates its being used as a kind of general rendezvous."

She was in a frock of pale frothy blue; and that this exquisitely coloured miniature of womanhood (whom, indeed, to call a miniature is to wrong with a gross comparison, of such unsubstantial airy hues did she seem conjured by fancy to assume a woman's form) could stab

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viciously with her parasol on the marble floor and spit forth such cold hate was as if a small blue butterfly should unnaturally have been given the nature and the weapons of a scorpion.

"Are you trying to order me about?" she sneered.

"I'm not trying to do anything," he answered fretfully. "I'm simply telling you what Sir Frederic said. It'll end in his forbidding any private parcels to be brought in by the Messenger. It makes him furious to see the Chancery table looking like a bargain counter."

The round-faced Marine emerged from the corridor on his way to accept Scrutton's hospitality, and Georgie, without paying the least attention to her husband's disapproval, waylaid him with a smile.

"Oh, *do* you know if Commander Hunter brought me some bathing-dresses?" she asked.

The round-faced Marine surrendered at once.

"I couldn't tell you, Miss," he said anxiously. "But we brought a whole lot of things. I know the porter at the Forring Office was a bit ikey about it when they was being done up, and, in fact, he happened to pass the remark, was we opening a shop out here. We left a lot of stuff at Rome, though."

Arthur was in the background, and there his wife kept him while she continued to bewitch the round-faced Marine.

"I do hope my bathing-dresses weren't left in Rome," she murmured wistfully.

The round-faced Marine was obviously much moved by the possibility of such a disaster. He longed to console this perfect lady, who was in his familiar thoughts not merely a perfect lady but a little bit of all right as well.

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"Oh dear, Miss, I hope they wasn't, I'm sure." Then the sight of those smiling lips inspired him with knightly dreams. "But if they was, Miss," he added, "jest you let me know, and I'll hook on to 'em somehow on the way back and bring them with me next time. I'll bring 'em for you if I has to put 'em in my pòckets."

"Oh, that's most awfully kind of you. Thank you so *very* much."

The round-faced Marine might have fallen upon his knees and vowed eternal fealty to his perfect lady, had not Scrutton appeared in the entrance of the little room beside the front door, raised his eyebrows in a question, imitated with one hand the shape of a glass, with the other a bottle, and poured slowly from one into the other an invisible liquor. The round-faced Marine perceived this enticing pantomime, touched his forelock, and disappeared into the porter's room.

"Don't you find it becomes tiring after a while having to charm everybody everywhere?" the husband asked his wife.

She answered him with mocking sweetness that on the contrary it gave her pleasure. Then bitterly she added :

"Except you. I must admit that trying to charm you *has* proved rather fatiguing."

He flushed at the allusion. The fury of desperation that seizes a weak man was on him. In another moment, without regard for the time and place, he would have let loose the pent-up resentment of months. He would have told Georgie where he was last night, pitched away everything to gratify this longing to tell her what he really thought of her and of himself and of their marriage. But

Sir Frederic's huge shoulders were leaning over the balustrade above.

"Is that you, Radcliffe? Take these telegrams to be encyphered, and bring me my stuff from the Bag as soon as Amberley has sorted it out."

The Third Secretary ran up the marble stairs with much more energy than usual. He was running away from the impulse to smash his life like a plate on the marble floor of the hall.

"Ah, Hunter, is that you?" Sir Frederic looked over to say to the Messenger who had come out from the Chancery. "Had a good journey? Capital! Well, I mustn't stay talking now. Lady Ovenden expects you to lunch at half-past one. You shall give me all your news then."

The Minister retired to his study. Arthur went into the Chancery to collect his letters and despatches. Georgie, though she was aware that Sir Frederic had not approved of her morning visit to the Legation, since he had never looked at her, was not disconcerted thereby. The way Commander Hunter was holding her hand a little longer than he need when she greeted him was quite enough to make her feel that she had not the least cause to be anxious about herself.

"Well, did you bring them for me?" she looked up under her broad-brimmed hat to ask demurely.

"I did, indeed," said the Messenger, lighting up that gay eye of his which had made so many women suppose they had struck the match. "And what's more, I peeped inside the parcel. *Most* attractive. I only wish I were a carefree young diplomat and could see them on."

"Oh, you are a dear, Commander Hunter. But if

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I'd known you were so interested I'd have asked you to choose them for me."

"I'll choose anything you like, dear lady."

"Anything?"

"Any mortal thing!"

The gay eyes scintillated.

"And I believe you'd choose jolly well," she murmured.

"I ought to."

"Such a lot of experience, I suppose? But, oh dear, what is the use of flirting with you? The moment you arrive, you dash away again."

"They don't give me a chance of doing anything else."

"Can't you dine with us at the hotel to-night and come on to the party here?"

"Alas, we're sailing for Mudros an hour earlier even than usual. They've sent us a signal to say that there's a Fritz waiting for us, which . . ."

"And you're going to give him a sporting chance to hit you, eh, Hunter, by telling the whole world when you sail? Bravo, that's the real Nelson spirit."

It was Waterlow who had come in, and interrupted this conversation.

"One isn't usually on the look out for spies in a legation," said Hunter sarcastically. If there was one man between Scapa and Mudros he could not stand it was this seedy-looking bounder with his *je sais tout* airs.

"No, that's one of my chief problems," the other retorted. "Indiscretion is the better part of valour, eh, Hunter? Good morning." He hesitated an instant. "Good morning, Mrs Radcliffe."

She pouted reproachfully at the formal style; and to hide his pleasure he turned quickly to the Messenger.

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"Anything for me in the bag, Hunter?"

The Messenger's gay eye was cold now as a pike's.

"I really don't know."

Waterlow inclined an ironical head.

"This sudden reticence ought to get you another decoration next week, Hunter. I see that Italy has rewarded your services with a pretty bit of red and white ribbon. What was that for? Holding the railway line under heavy smoke?"

"How naughty you are to tease poor Commander Hunter," said Georgie, shaking her head.

This was too much for the Messenger's vanity. He lost his temper.

"As a matter of fact your people in London wanted me to bring out some bombs," he said to Waterlow. "But I complained to the Admiralty, and your people were well strafed for trying to use *me* as a spy."

Waterlow scowled.

"I'd be grateful if you could manage not to quack about these bombs all over the Mediterranean, Hunter."

"It's your own fault," said the Messenger hotly.

"No doubt, and it'll be your fault if the charming lady you—er—fathered from Aix-les-Bains to Rome on your last journey across the Mt. Cenis . . ." he broke off.

All very silly. All rather petty. Only making one more enemy to create prejudice against him at the dinner tables of admirals and ambassadors. Still, he simply could not stick Hunter. It was no use. Ah, he was going, thank goodness.

The Messenger was calling for his round-faced Marine.

"Good-bye, Mrs Radcliffe. I only wish I could be

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with you to-night, but . . .” he stopped. He had a gallant and gracious formula for this kind of excuse, but somehow with that fellow in his stained grey flannel suit and battered old panama hat he could not give it expression. “If you want me to bring you out anything next time, Mrs Radcliffe, let me know at my hotel before I leave.”

Without even a nod to Waterlow he turned and hurried down the steps to his car.

Georgie Radcliffe bit her underlip and shook a reproachful head.

“I think you’re very unkind to tease the poor Messenger like that. But then you tease everybody, don’t you, Roger?”

He stood looking at her without a word. He was thinking of Milton’s report of the scene last night at the Pension Bonbon, which he had received just before he drove round here. He was thinking what a picture she made and how much Arthur deserved a lesson. He was thinking, too, what an air of possessiveness that fellow Hunter had been assuming with her. He was thinking that really he had been a great fool not to take advantage of last night. He was thinking how white that little tooth was against the flooding crimson of her lips. And for all these thoughts she offered him a penny.

“I was thinking,” he said with half a sigh, “that we should meet again to-night.”

“Yes, but to-night we shall be in a crowd.”

And before he could reply she had left him, the lightest echo of a laugh rippling back across the solemn hall as she floated down the steps and vanished into the sunlight.

“Did you remember about my new under-porter, sir?” Scrutton was asking.

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"Eh? What? Oh, yes." He wrenched himself out of the dream. "I'm having him looked into, Scrutton. I ought to hear by to-night, and I'll let you know."

On the way to the Chancery Arthur Radcliffe, coming out with Sir Frederic's despatches, stopped him.

"Oh, hullo, Pirate, I rather want to have a talk with you over something—something rather private."

For a moment, with his mind full of Arthur's wife, Waterlow was startled.

"It's something I want you to do for me—something that is rather in your line. When can I come round to the robber's den?"

"I'll send the car for you at one o'clock. We might lunch together."

"No, don't bother. It's only just round the corner, isn't it? I don't know if I can get away by one."

Waterlow looked annoyed. Although Number Ten was known to be his headquarters, he still could not bear it to be treated as an ordinary house. And anyway he did not want Radcliffe there.

"The car can wait. I'd rather see you at my other house," he said curtly.

"Oh, have you got another robber's den? How splendid!"

The Third Secretary had no idea of being diplomatic; but he could not have asked a question better calculated to please Waterlow, who in spite of his growing cynicism over espionage and contre-espionage still took a naïve pleasure in the most trivial piece of successful mystification.

"The car will wait for you. I shall be at home most of the day, getting my stuff ready for the Messenger."

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"They're sailing at six, aren't they?"

"Oh, you know the exact hour, too, do you?"

"Yes, Hunter made a point of it. There's some submarine scare. He's calling for the Bag at five sharp. So, you'll have your stuff ready in good time, won't you? And if you could let your car wait for me I could squeeze in my talk with you during lunch-time. It's rather urgent and frightfully private."

Waterlow did not bother to wonder what Arthur wanted. He had interviewed so many people urgently and privately since he came here. He was beginning to suffer from a surfeit of gratified curiosity. In the Chancery he gathered together the three or four heavily sealed envelopes addressed to W, and finding Amberley engaged in turning over the pages of the cypher and chanting groups of five figures for Vane-Howard to take down he just waved to them and retired. He had reached the front door when Colonel Buckworth arrived back from his royal visit. With his polychrome of ribbons and scarlet tabs and gilded oak leaves and over-heated crimson face, his spurs and boots and shining buttons, he looked in the austere and shaded hall of the Legation like a brass band in church.

"What happened to the car?" he puffed at Waterlow.

"Why didn't it wait for me at the Palace?"

"I told Gunton to tell you it had to come back at once for me, Colonel."

"Well, it was extremely awkward," said the Colonel huffily. "I had to walk about a quarter of a mile before I found a vehicle."

"I'm sorry, Colonel, but it couldn't be helped," the owner of the envied car said pleasantly.

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But the Military Attaché was not appeased.

"I suppose I have to thank you for the ridiculous and barely legible gobblet of information Scrutton brought into my room this morning. I wish when you have occasion to write to me you would write properly. I do not care to be addressed as Colonel B. Nor do I expect you to sign yourself 'yours W.'"

"I received the information very late and in view of your audience I thought you would care to know about the German officer. As for signing myself W, I always sign myself W, and shall continue to do so."

The Colonel swelled.

"You received your information after dinner, I may presume?"

Waterlow nodded.

"That is precisely what it sounded like."

"The information was perfectly good," Waterlow retorted sharply.

"So good," said the Colonel with a rumble of mirthless laughter, "that I could not resist passing it on to the King."

"Who was as much amused as you, no doubt?"

"Yes, we had a good laugh about it together."

"The King denied that he had just seen Major von Rangel before he saw you?"

"He did not condescend to deny it," said the Colonel impressively. "It was hardly necessary."

"I'm glad to know he didn't have to do that, because now without suggesting that he is a liar you can send him a print of the snapshot one of my people took this morning of Major Ernst von Rangel being saluted by the sentry as he came out of the Palace gates. It's being developed

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at this moment. You shall have a copy this evening at the reception. You might like to show it to the Chief of the General Staff, or to that efficient little fellow Drimys. Good morning, Colonel, I'm busy."

He hurried down the steps of the Legation and jumped into his car. He was angry with himself for having been drawn like that by the Military Attaché. It had been idiotic of him to mention that snapshot, and it had been even more idiotic ever to allow it to be taken. If this German envoy really were going to carry important despatches, and if he really were being taken off in a submarine, the people here would be at a good deal of trouble to look after him. It was odd that the *Coppelia* should have had a warning. That meant a submarine had been sighted or heard in these waters within the last twenty-four hours. Well, at that rate, such a warning did not conflict with his own information.

Waterlow was in the state of mind of some competitor for a picture-puzzle prize. His solution of each new picture did not seem capable of being improved, and yet the idea of really winning the prize was beyond his imagination. Was it all worth while? Was it worth while to fail again, as in the end he always did fail somehow to being off these coups? One was indignant with people like Buckworth and Hunter. But in the long run were they not right? What had he in fact achieved since he left London in that first winter of the war? A certain amount of information from Turkey and rather less from Bulgaria. But what use had been made of it? And in any case was not such information, though obtained at the cost of several lives, merely what might have been deduced from the military situation? What had been established here?

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That the King was afraid of the Kaiser. But would not that have been perfectly obvious without all this elaborate and expensive underground mechanism? Was it all worth while? He was falling into one of those moods for which all his life the alleviation had been alcohol. So far he had managed to avoid that treatment out here. But if the sun was going to shine eternally like this he must have some recreation of the mind. So why not take advantage of Georgie Radcliffe's fancy for him? What emotional responsibility would there be? None. Recreation . . . just a recreation. He leaned back in the car and closed his eyes. Ah, he could still feel the sun on his face. He was relieved that he could feel it, for the non-entity of him in this utter fatigue was physical as well as mental. It was like a palsy. And one day this life here would come to an end. The war would finish. There would be a grand destruction of the records. They would not be kept like those in the Chancery. So much fever of industry for nothing. And what should he do? Go back to the Danube and the Black Sea? To the reek of oil . . . to ostentatious dinners with his owner? Old Calamenopoulos had always been very good to him. There he would be, sitting in that great garish house in Bucharest. And old Madame Calamenopoulos would be wheezing away at the head of the table as usual. So fat. Oh, so very, very fat. Yes, old Calamenopoulos had thought what a good thing it would be if he were to marry one of his pretty granddaughters. And had he not considered it? Such a pretty little girl. What had been her name? Oh, yes, Iphigenia. But he had decided that pretty little girls like Iphigenia were dangerous experiments when approaching forty. If the war had not

interrupted everything, he might have counted on being able to retire about five years hence. But now it might be ten years hence before he could afford it. But he would retire at last. He would collect butterflies and moths again. That would amuse him for the rest of his life. And garden a bit. Much better than marrying passionate and pretty little girls of eighteen like Iphigenia. But Georgie Radcliffe was different. She would not be a responsibility. He knew just how to keep her amused without boring himself. And one wanted something like her in this dust and dazzle. She would have the same effect as dressing for dinner. Her husband was probably involved with this cabaret girl. And anyway he did not count. That was obvious enough. What about that fellow Drimys? Every afternoon from five till sometimes seven o'clock. That was Milton's supplementary information this morning. No doubt he had obtained it from the waiter? Well, if he had been with her yesterday afternoon, it had not had much effect on her evening. Still, she would have to surrender Drimys. He had no intention of being driven in a pair with that little dago. It would be rather amusing to turn up at the hotel earlier this evening on the chance of finding him still with her. Then he could read her a lecture on the indiscretion of such behaviour, and at the end of it console her himself. Of course, if this submarine stunt came off, it would be a final answer to all criticism. If for the whole of his time out here he could show nothing except one submarine, the country would have had full value for money. Yes, one submarine, and the investment would have been a sound one. If to a submarine were added the German mail? If a submarine really were sent it would mean

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that the German mail was an exceptionally important one. Poor old Buckie would be so dreadfully mortified. But what was the good of wallowing in such daydreams? Of course, no submarine would come, or if it did come, it would be to a rendezvous they had failed to foresee. Georgie Radcliffe was a much more feasible achievement. That fellow Hunter had assumed a confoundedly proprietary air with her just now. Perhaps when he arrived next time he would find her a little less flattering to his self-esteem. Of course, this inclination to discuss her with himself showed that he did not really care anything about her. It was nothing better than a cold-blooded piece of self-indulgence. On one side a bottle of brandy: on the other Georgie Radcliffe.

The car began to undulate. He recognized the feel of the unfinished road leading up to his house and opened his eyes.

Outside the café the police spies were sitting in groups just as they were yesterday. Perhaps this attempt at extra vigilance was a sign of the importance attached by the local authorities to the visit of the German. It was evidently intended that nobody should leave either this house or Number Ten on foot without being followed. *Was* this submarine only a daydream?

In the big green-shaded room on the first floor he found Crowder in a state of cherubic virtue. For the first time since he joined Waterlow the whole of the contents of the Bag were ready for despatch in good time.

"I'm trying to get things a bit more prompt, sir," he explained. "Bit of a struggle at first, but I've strafed everybody all round, and I think things will run a bit smoother now."

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Waterlow grinned at him.

"Here you are, Pay," he said, tossing him the morning's undecyphered telegrams. "Get these decoded while I go through the letters."

Crowder rubbed his smooth chin apologetically.

"Beg pardon, er—sir. Beg pardon, sir, but did you call me 'Pay' just then?"

"I did."

"Is that the regular expression, or is it just a joke of your own? You won't mind me asking, but I want to get these things right and not make a fool of myself."

"'Pay' is the regular way of addressing an Assistant-Paymaster in the Royal Navy; yes, Mr Crowder."

There was nothing urgent to answer among the letters; and when the telegrams had been decoded there was nothing to answer in any of them. By one o'clock all the stuff for the Messenger was sealed up and ready.

Waterlow lit a cigarette and yawned.

"Is this the lull before the storm?" he asked. "There doesn't seem anything to do now except wait for what Keats can tell us. You'd better go to the Tip Top to-night, Crowder."

"Right-o."

"I don't trust Milton in an emergency."

Crowder shook his head to express his awareness of Milton's inadequacy.

"Nor for that matter," Waterlow continued, "do I trust you. Still, if the Major should take it into his head to bolt to-night and Keats hasn't managed to let us know in time to make any preparations, I don't see what can be done anyway."

"Well, I might have the car standing by outside the

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Tip Top," Crowder suggested. "And if he went off I could go off after him."

"My good ass, he's hardly likely to leave from the Tip Top for one thing, and for another I must confess I should be very much interested to know what you think you'd do if you did catch him."

The Assistant-Paymaster was spared from answering this riddle by his chief's jumping up to exclaim:

"By Jove, I forgot I'd promised to send the car round to the Legation at one o'clock to fetch Mr Radcliffe. Run down, there's a good man, and send Gunton along. Tell him to wait till Mr Radcliffe comes out and then to bring him straight here. After that he can have his own lunch while he's waiting."

Crowder went out, grinning. Gunton's passionate red-haired Italian wife was under the impression whenever her husband had lunch at this house that he took it there for the pleasure of Aphrodite's company—not the goddess of love, but a squinting Smyrniote maid of all work who could, if put to it, cook a meal that was just edible.

Waterlow opened the french-windows, and went out on the balcony. The view was a wide one from this rising ground upon the outskirts of the city. For miles the grey-green plain stretched beyond a foreground of scattered cubes of half-built white houses. And on one side beyond the plain was the glinting of the sea. Would that be the road the German would take? But on the other side of the city hidden from here there were other roads leading to the sea. Yes, unless they knew where the submarine was coming it was going to be pretty hopeless on this peninsula.

From where Waterlow was standing he could look

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down into the arid enclosure of an asylum for pauper lunatics, where wretched creatures with shaven heads wandered aimlessly about in the sun or squatted together like baboons in the shade of a high wall.

"But between us who are fighting this war and those poor imbeciles how slight the difference must appear to God," he thought in his present mood of weariness. Now two of them actually were fighting. Their screams of anger came up to his ears like the cries of wild beasts. Beyond the asylum was a cemetery packed with cypresses and a tawdry huddle of tombs. And beyond that stretched the flickering grey-green plain with reedy shallow streams and olive-groves, and here and there dark clusters of cypresses to show where more dead people lay, and squalid villages for the quick, and distant stone-blue mountains, and for a girdle the winking silver of the sea.

He came back out of the glare into the subdued light of the big square room and rang for a cup of coffee.

"Will you be wanting me this afternoon, sir?" Crowder came in to ask. "Because if you wouldn't be, I thought I'd lay down for a couple of hours after I'd had a morsel to eat."

"By all means, Piemaster. Oh, and on second thoughts you'd better not go to the 'Tip Top to-night. I forgot I should be dining out and going on to this affair at the Legation. Go up and wait for Keats at Number Fifteen, and if he doesn't get there by half-past nine come back to Number Ten and stand by."

"Right-o, Commander W."

Such injunctions were so familiar that the Assistant-Paymaster answered mechanically in his pre-naval fashion.

"Nothing more you want?" he asked in the doorway.

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"Not now, anyway. I'll see you at Number Ten round about five."

When the fat man had gone Waterlow sat down in a moderately comfortable wicker chair to wait for his coffee and read an old magazine till Arthur Radcliffe arrived. He felt the vague discomfort of a very busy man who finds himself without anything to do for a few minutes. Nikko, the big Anatolian Greek, with moustaches like the boughs of a tree, came in with a minute cup of coffee. He had made it himself, scowling at the attempts of Aphrodite to assert herself.

"Good?" he asked anxiously, when Waterlow sipped it.

"Good," said Waterlow.

"Good!" said Nikko, and retired superbly to ponder as always his revenge on Turks.

It was scarcely half-past one when the car came back with Arthur Radcliffe.

"Rather jolly quarters you've got up here, Pirate. Not overlooked either," he said in that pleasant young diplomat's voice which like a chorister's vanishes with age.

"Not actually overlooked, but very anxiously watched day and night," Waterlow said. "Well, Arthur, what is it?"

The Third Secretary smoothed back his fair hair, and the harassed look that came into his eyes gave his debonair appearance a suddenly crumpled look.

"I want your help," he said abruptly, lighting a cigarette.

"Money or advice?"

"Oh, neither. It's about a girl."

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"Too late for advice, and perhaps too soon for money, eh?"

"You don't by any chance know what girl I'm talking about?" the young man asked suspiciously.

"Queenie Walters."

Arthur bit his lip.

"So it's all over the place already," he muttered.

"No, not exactly all over the place. At present only noted down in my private book."

The young man stiffened.

"I should have thought there were more important things to enter in your private note-book. I really fail to see what bearing my interest in a young woman has on the political or the military situation out here."

"Except that this particular young woman happens to be a German."

The young man flushed angrily.

"She's not German. She's English."

"That she certainly is not," Waterlow declared sharply.

"She has an English passport."

"I know. The stolen one of an English music-hall artiste called Maud Moffat."

Arthur shook his head with a triumphant laugh.

"Your agents have evidently got hold of the wrong girl, Pirate. Queenie's passport is made out in the name of Elsie Walters. Here it is."

He pulled out of his pocket one of the old pre-war passports which crackled like a big five-pound note when he handed it to Waterlow, who spread it out on the table.

"This is seven years old," he pointed out.

"I know. That's what I've come to consult you about."

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Waterlow took from a small drawer a magnifying glass and examined the name of the holder.

"It doesn't seem to have been tampered with," he muttered. "I wonder where she bought this dear old relic of a gentlemanly world."

"Is it necessary to assume that she did buy it?"

"Or begged it, or borrowed it? Or perhaps stole it? It evidently isn't her own. For one thing her name isn't Elsie."

"Oh, she explained that," said Arthur quickly. "Elsie is her real name. Queenie is just a pet name."

Waterlow laughed.

"My dear Arthur, you don't seriously hope to persuade me that Miss Queenie Walters obtained this passport from Sir Edward Grey seven years ago. Look at her age here. Twenty-five. That would make her thirty-two to-day. I never heard of any lover blind enough to think his mistress older than she really was."

"Oh, I recognize that she'll require a new passport," the young man said with a frown.

"What for?"

"That's what I've come to talk about. She hopes to travel to England."

"I've no doubt the young lady also hopes to travel to Heaven one day."

"You mean she'll have difficulty in getting home?"

"Even more difficulty, I should say, than in getting to England. Or perhaps even Heaven," he added with a chuckle.

"You don't believe that England is her home?"

"No, lad, I certainly do not."

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"I'm sure if you talked to her," Arthur pleaded, "you wouldn't want to sneer at her like this."

"Probably not. I'm notoriously polite to women. One is always polite to what one fears."

"And I believe if you'd consent to see her," Arthur went on earnestly, "you'd want to help her."

"In what way?"

"The Consul would give her a new passport on your recommendation and mine?"

"He would."

"And a visé for England?"

"He would."

"Well, then you'll do this for me, won't you?"

Waterlow was silent. He was thinking what a nasty self-conscious position he would be in to-day if that telephone bell had not saved him from it yesterday evening. His silence encouraged the Third Secretary to suppose that he was considering the possibility of giving Queenie a passport.

"I should be more than grateful to you," he pleaded.

Waterlow came back to this morning.

"Recommend a suspected German agent for a British passport?" he said harshly. "No, my dear Arthur, fond as I am of you, I'm afraid I don't quite see my way to do that."

"But Queenie isn't a German agent," the other insisted. "As a matter of fact she hates the Germans."

Waterlow looked at him compassionately.

"She has told you that herself, of course?"

"Oh, dozens of times," said the young man with intense earnestness.

"Arthur, Arthur, I cannot believe that anyone so

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naïve as you will ever represent the Court of St James's in Paris."

"Never mind about me," he said impatiently. "We can't always judge people on conventional lines. We must sometimes use our imagination. You never seemed to be the average, dried-up official. That's why I came to you. But you might have been withering in a blasted office all your life. I can't make you out."

"Luckily *that* won't prejudice your diplomatic career. But speaking as somebody about twenty years older than yourself who has made the most infernal mess of his own career, I must insist that what will prejudice your diplomatic career quite hopelessly is a quixotic interest in pretty little blonde actresses of doubtful nationality who manage to leave enemy capitals in mid-war, travelling with false passports."

"I quite agree with you," said Arthur. "And that's why I want to get her to England. It's for my own sake just as much as hers. I'm not being quixotic. I'm madly in love with this girl."

"Madly in love, eh?" Waterlow echoed. "Gad, I half envy you, Arthur," he said with a sigh. "Still I don't feel that a hopeless passion of this kind will appeal to the romantic heart of the Permanent Under-Secretary."

Arthur flushed. His vanity had been stung.

"It's not a hopeless passion," he exclaimed angrily. "The girl is just as much in love with me as I am with her."

Waterlow began to hum one of the airs from *Traviata*.

"Oh, no, she's not nearly as sophisticated as that," said Arthur. "I wish you'd consent to see her for yourself. You'd be moved by her helplessness. I know you

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would. She's a waif of the war, a leaf tossed hither and thither . . ."

Waterlow broke in on the young man's emotion with ironical applause.

"For a novel, splendid, lad! For a passport, not quite the description required. Frontier officials are cynics. All people who spend their lives in an atmosphere of draughts and nervous agitation are exposed to the worst side of humanity. Diogenes wouldn't live in a tub nowadays. He would choose either a public lavatory or a railway-station."

"Damn it, don't go on sneering," Arthur exploded. "I tell you I'm nearly mad with worry. I must get her away from here. I can't stand the sight of the life she's compelled to lead here. Perhaps if Georgie weren't out here, I might set her up on her own and . . ."

"Look here," Waterlow interrupted. "Do you mind leaving your wife out of this?"

He was ashamed of himself for seeming to be priggish; but he was too near the verge of being able to justify to himself any kind of behaviour of his own with Georgie to take the risk of hearing this young man balance his wife against his mistress.

"You really need not worry yourself about Georgie," Arthur said. "I assure you she is more than capable of looking after herself."

"Look here, if you're going to talk like a cad, and a feeble cad at that, I'm not going to listen to you. Leave your wife out of this business, I say."

"Well, will you help me by getting Queenie to England? She longs to go there. And if she can get to England she won't so much mind being separated from

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me. No, don't smile. Please! I know you think it's just a commonplace infatuation, but if I could only persuade you to see the girl yourself and listen to her story, I believe you'd help her."

"Well, first of all let us be quite clear about the situation," said Waterlow with a touch of brutality in his manner. He had heard so many tales of human misery during these last months that he could not altogether hide a certain resentment he felt against this beautifully dressed, rich, handsome, and socially secure young man, whose duty was so inextricably mixed up with his own peace of mind. "You have fallen madly in love with an undesirable young woman of doubtful nationality, ambiguous status, and deplorable morals."

"If you like to put it that way, yes. But I'm certain that you'll find out for yourself how exceptional she is."

"The woman we love is always exceptional," said Waterlow coldly. "The point is that she is not exceptional enough to make you pitch away the world for her. No, no, don't protest. I'm not criticizing you for that. On the contrary I applaud these dregs of commonsense that you allow yourself. Still, you'll admit that even your love is not blind enough to see that, from a worldly standpoint, there are grave objections to her."

"I don't think I should make her happy," said Arthur sullenly.

"Quite so. And she certainly wouldn't make you happy. Very well. So long as she remains in reach, you haven't the courage to break with her and you haven't the self-control to let her go her own way."

"It's not a question of self-control. I might argue that I have too much imagination," said the young man.

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"Or not enough," Waterlow added drily. "It would be just as easy to maintain that. You can't have it both ways. If you had the imagination you claim, you would love her accordingly; and you would allow nothing to prevent you from at any rate trying to make her happy. Your wonderful imagination would carry you over the social obstacles. As things are, I prefer to call it lack of self-control. You know that if she lives on here without your protection her way of life must inevitably wound your vanity sooner or later and rouse your jealousy. You are afraid you won't be able to stand it. You call this fear imagination. You dread making a public ass of yourself, eh? So you want to get her out of your sight."

"I want her to be happy," Arthur interrupted.

"Yes, every man wants happiness for the woman he is beginning to find an embarrassment. You don't happen to be sexually tired of this girl yet, therefore you don't want her to find another man, or at any rate another man whom you will be aware of. So you want to send her to England, because she happens to have told you she wants to go to England. She might have asked you for an ermine coat or a diamond bracelet or even a sum of money. But she asked you for something which will not only gratify her but which will also relieve you. I confess you're a lucky fellow to find a mistress whose whim coincides like this with your advantage."

"It isn't a whim," Arthur declared hotly. "The passion of her life is to be English."

"Not you?" Waterlow asked quickly.

"I honestly believe that I am the only man she ever loved. You goad me into saying things like that, damn you," he added sulkily.

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"To be perfectly frank, Arthur, what I am trying to find out is which of the two in this matter I am supposed to be helping. You or her?"

"Her more than me," said Arthur.

"You swear you believe that?"

"Yes, really. Why do you ask?"

"I have my own reasons for asking," Waterlow replied, and in his eyes there was the expression of a man in whose mind a plan is forming. "All right, Arthur," he went on abruptly. "I'll go and see Miss Queenie Walters this afternoon. Leave the passport with me."

"You'll go and see her this afternoon?" Arthur repeated.

"Why not?"

"Oh, I don't know," he stammered. "Wouldn't it be better if she came to see you?"

Waterlow looked at him curiously. The young fool was actually jealous.

"Did she suggest coming to see me?" he asked.

"No, she didn't suggest it; but I told her you'd probably want her to come and interview you about the passport."

"I think she'll be more at home at Mère Bonbon's," Waterlow laughed.

"Oh, just as you like, of course," Arthur said almost sulkily. "Shall I tell her you're coming?"

"Certainly not. If I find she expects me I shall have nothing more to say to her."

"The only thing is," Arthur demurred, "she may be lying down."

"You mean she may not be up yet? Yes, of course, she had rather a disturbed night, didn't she? Well, I

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shall have to be given the privileges of the family doctor."

"I was with her myself as a matter of fact last night," Arthur blurted out.

Waterlow laughed.

"My dear Arthur, I may not be absolutely sure about the whereabouts of a Bulgarian unit. I may be a little hazy about the condition of the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*. But do believe me I am absolutely infallible on the nocturnal movements of the members of the British Legation."

"And don't you rather hate that sort of information?" Arthur asked. "I mean to say . . ." he stammered, and was silent.

"I loathe it," Waterlow answered bitterly. "And now I must say au revoir till this evening. I dine with you, don't forget."

"I do hope you'll be able to help that girl," the young man said eagerly. "I'll be eternally grateful to you if you can."

"I shall know more about the possibility of that when we meet at dinner.

And again that jealous look glinted from the young man's eyes in the tempered sunlight of this big square room.

When Arthur was gone Waterlow unlocked first the safe, and then an inner drawer in the safe. He took out a piece of paper on which was written in Milton's bold, upright, legible hand.

1. *Last night Mr Radcliffe visited Queenie Walters (suspect) at the Pension Bonbon. She had spent the evening drinking with Ernst von Dangel (suspect). At 3 a.m. von Dangel was shouting for her in the street outside until twenty minutes.*

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2. *Arthur Radcliffe has left Queenie Walters (suspect) at 4 a.m.*

3. *Mrs Radcliffe, wife of Arthur Radcliffe (see above) receives Captain Paul Drimys (suspect) every afternoon from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.*

Waterlow contemplated these facts for some time. Then he struck a match and burnt the piece of paper. Afterwards he leaned back pensively in the moderately comfortable wicker chair until Nikko came in to say that the car had come back.

“Tell him I shall be down almost at once.”

The ashes of Milton's information were swept across the table in the draught from the open door and dissolved to motes in corners of the big square room.

THE SECOND AFTERNOON

IN the dining-room of her notorious house Mère Bonbon was presiding at the head of the table over the remains of the mid-day meal. The actual eating had been finished long ago ; but the commotion last night in the Pension had made Mère Bonbon so voluble, so eloquent even, that the half-dozen or so of her boarders who had slouched down from their rooms at half-past one were still lolling round the uncleared table in various kinds of deshabelle, smoking cigarettes and drinking bottled beer while they listened to her chatter instead of retiring to their rooms and trying to sleep away the hot afternoon.

When the maid of all work shuffled in to say that an important *monsieur* was waiting to see Mère Bonbon about the damage to her lamp last night, the old lady (though to call her old is to pay more attention to the wear and tear of vice than of age, for she was hardly more than fifty-five, perhaps not so much) crossed herself. She had just pushed away the dirty plates and dishes from her end of the table and after a triple cut she was gazing at the cards spread out before her in a horse-shoe to discover if her wish would be granted. At the moment the outer bell sounded she had deduced from the arrangement of the cards that it would be granted. Therefore, when the arrival was announced of an important *monsieur* to deal with the question of her lamp she felt a stir of the supernatural in her dining-room, since her wish had been that

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somebody should do something about that lamp, should, in fact, offer to pay her perhaps three or four times as much as it was worth. She bade Eugenia, the maid of all work, show this important visitor into her presence at once. Then turning to her boarders she begged them not to go away, because after all, she assured them with a leer, men did not for ever want to see girls *en grande tenue* or tricked out for the stage. Their intimate life *en famille* possessed the novelty of attraction for some, was in fact capable of exacting a quite unusual interest.

"*Nous sommes tellement bien chez nous, mes fillettes, n'est-ce pas ?*" she wheezed amicably. "*Enfin, on respire.*"

The girls winked at one another. Mère Bonbon made them pay heavily for this domestic atmosphere. Still, in justice to her they would have admitted that there was more solid comfort at the Pension Bonbon than in the outwardly grand and more tasteful Pension Amélie. Amélie with her languid airs of a former star, her pale double-chinned refinement, and worst of all her lardy pietism, charged even more for her marble halls with palm trees in tubs, her nice ignorance either that her boarders received visitors or that every mosquito canopy in the house was full of bugs. It was typical of Amélie that she should still expect to be called Amélie. There had been overcharged boarders of hers malicious enough to say that rather than let a visitor go away disappointed from her Pension she would offer him the entertainment of her own bedroom. At any rate, none of Mère Bonbon's boarders, smarting under an exorbitant charge for perhaps a broken tooth-glass, had ever accused her of that. And many of them had frankly admitted:

"*Il y a quelque chose chez Bonbon.*"

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Perhaps the homely stuffiness of the house recalled to those it sheltered for a space interiors in the heart of France, which they, wandering over the face of Europe, might never behold again. Even English girls who passed their weeks or months *chez Bonbon* were reminded of familiar scenes of home. This big dining-room below the level of the entrance-hall was like those sitting-rooms in the basements of tall London houses before whose windows the legs of the world pass to and fro behind railings. There is in many of those unsunned rooms a cosiness that is never attained on the floors above. Year after year they have been accumulating the ugly and out of date, but still serviceable accessories of grander rooms. They are sometimes almost silted up by this gradual deposit from the tide of fashion above ; but that only makes them cosier. Their cupboards are crammed to overflowing. Their corners and shelves and recesses are crowded with the shabby relics of an immemorial family life. The chairs in such rooms have always lost their springs, because the people who have sat in them have never used them respectfully. They are chairs that are genuinely meant to be sat in not on, and their seats have been hollowed out like nests by an endless series of occupants entirely at their ease. The carpets in such rooms have been worn threadbare ; but the grey webbing has somehow escaped a squalid or depressing look, for the colours of these carpets have been absorbed into the family life, and to those who have trodden them day in day out for many years their reds and greens and blues are still apparent.

The dining-room at the Pension Bonbon was just such a room as one of those. The wallpaper was torn or rubbed here and there ; but wherever this had happened

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earlier wallpapers revealed, one beneath the other like geological strata, the periods of the house's long past. The present hue was a dingy mustard yellow not differing much from the hue of Mère Bonbon's complexion. It was covered adequately with pictures and faded photographs. Most of the former were old Christmas supplements of *The Graphic* and *Illustrated London News*. There they all were, the familiar newspaper prizes of the 'eighties and early 'nineties—*Cherry Ripe* and *Bubbles* and half a dozen more in chipped and tarnished frames. How had they reached Mère Bonbon's dining-room? Some sentimental English exile may have died out here and left his pictures to be bought cheap at a sale of his effects. Whatever their origin, they were likely to remain in this room for many years to come. Mère Bonbon might pass on ; but her successor would inherit this room, and since Mère Bonbons are conservative creatures change would come slowly. Amélie's redecoration of her pension in a modern ostentatious style had not added a halfpenny to her bank account. Amélie was trying to be artistic and superior, to keep a foot in both camps, to be mother and daughter both. Mère Bonbon used to shake her head over her colleague's eccentricity. She attributed it to an unduly deferred menopause. Amélie had once paid a visit to this dining-room and had sat on the edge of one of the battered armchairs, wriggling affectedly and watching the floor for cockroaches.

"*C'est terrible*," she had commented in her mincing voice. "*On se sent chez une pauvre vieille couturière.*"

Perhaps it was the dressmaker's dummy in one corner with its sheeny black opulent bust, or perhaps it was the odds and ends of sewing left lying about by the girls, which

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made Amélie sniff so disdainfully this atmosphere of cooking and cheese and scent and birdseed and tobacco and bottled beer. She spared them too much of her *chichi*; but she must have been comparing this cluttered-up den with the reception room *chez elle*, where the girls came in to gossip with visitors in a perfume of burning pastilles and sequin-sewn curtains, and sat around in white wicker-chairs with cushions of bright yellow silk and bows of pale blue. In such a room nobody dared offer any of her girls bottled beer; in such a room champagne entered almost of its own accord. However, with all its grandeur there were bugs at the Pension Amélie, and *chez Bonbon* by some miracle there was not a single one.

If the pictures were mostly English, the photographs were mostly French. There were barrack squares with rows of diminutive baggy-trousered conscripts drilling in what may once have been sunshine, but which looked now like a foggy blight. There were thronged Marseilles streets faded as much as the barrack squares to a northern murk. There were ladies with coiffures like astrakhan and hour-glass waists, of any one of which the dressmaker's dummy in the corner might have been the skeleton. There were ladies whose tight-encased legs were almost veiled in immense sprawling signatures and sentiments of affection; and there were *beaux garçons* with moustaches of heart-breaking silkiness and regularity. The mantelpiece was crowded with In Memoriam cards and patent medicines and vulgar little china figures and dusty relics of the last carnival. A filmy fly-specked mirror reflected the rustic hinterland of a large cuckoo clock and with an added dimness of fusty comfort the littered room. The windows looked out on a sun-bleached courtyard surrounded

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by high buildings ; on a table in the bay stood a gilded cage of three cupolas lively with canaries, and hanging against the dingy yellow panels on either side was a wooden cage of green budgerigars huddling in rows on their perches. There was also a grey parrot who, when the conversation became shrill, outshrilled it with a series of rapid obscenities in *argot*, which by frequent repetition had lost all power to astonish or shock anybody and were accepted as an essential part of the room like the creaking of the shiny battered sham-leather armchairs or the clanking treadles of the sewing-machine.

At the invitation of Eugenia, Waterlow descended to this room seeming even more fusty than usual after the dazzle of the streets. Mère Bonbon welcomed him effusively, not so much because she feared him as a man of influence in the underworld of the city, but because he never failed to drink her bottled beer and press the girls to drink with him. The profit on each bottle of beer was relatively much larger than upon a bottle of champagne, and the drinking of beer was entirely free from any suggestion of being a preliminary to something else. To drink beer with her boarders was a sign of comradeship. It meant that he was a friend of the house, not the friend of some particular inhabitant, still less the lover, and least of all the nervous prurient taster of her wares. On this occasion her cordiality was doubled by the prospect of coming to a reasonable settlement over the broken lamp.

Mère Bonbon was hunched up in her high chair at the end of the table in the black and yellow quilted wrapper she had worn last night to repel the German invasion. She looked more like a great blotchy salamander than a

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toad this afternoon. Her fat grimy squarrous forefinger had tapped its way round the horseshoe of cards, which as Waterlow entered she gathered up and shuffled again preparatory to laying them out in small groups for the house, for herself, for her bed, for her friends, for her wish, and several other dedications.

"*Entrez, monsieur le capitaine,*" she wheezed. "*De la bière, hein ?*"

The visitor nodded with a smile.

"Eugenia," she shrieked. "*Apporte des bouteilles, tu m'entends ?*"

The maid of all work shuffled off grinning toward the cellar.

"*Ah, la bière!*" Mère Bonbon wheezed enthusiastically. "*Ça fait bien à l'estomac, vous savez. Eh bien, asseyez-vous, monsieur le capitaine. Vous connaissez toutes ces petites dames.*"

Waterlow took a seat at the table beside the hostess and opposite Adèle, who was cracking melon seeds with her little pointed teeth and eyeing him with her sharp hungry glances. In her stained blue wrapper and with her touzled lacklustre yellow hair she looked like a shop-soiled doll. Next him was a very dark Roumanian girl who peered round at him over her curved shoulders from sombre incurious eyes before she returned to her task of sticking matches into the skin of a banana. Lolling round the table over empty coffee-cups and plates scattered with crumbs and tobacco ash there were several other girls, some with feverish gestures and disillusioned feline eyes, others heavy-lipped and indolent, like dark airless caves of womanhood. He was glad to see that Queenie was not in the room.

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Mère Bonbon looked round contentedly at the bottles of beer set out over the table.

"*Santé ! Santé !*" she wheezed.

Everybody sipped from her tumbler and looked with weary politeness in Waterlow's direction. A girl at the end of the table made some coarse remark in a deep husky voice, and Mère Bonbon shook with merriment.

"*Ah, la rosse !*" she panted, her big ear-pendants tinkling as her head wagged.

Then she beckoned Eugenia to her and whispered a direction. The maid-of-all-work presently returned with a small basket full of fragments of red glass.

Once more everybody had to hear the history of that lamp, of Mère Bonbon's military romance, of what life was in Marseilles thirty years ago, of her intention to settle in Algiers and open an hotel for tourists, of her lover's death from small-pox, and of all the other might-have-beens of Mère Bonbon's career. Thus, she concluded with a flow of oily tears, it might be seen by one so intelligent as *monsieur le capitaine* that in breaking her lamp it might be said that her heart had been broken anew.

Waterlow nodded sympathetically. But how had it happened exactly ?

"*Adèle va tout exposer,*" Mère Bonbon sniffed. "*Adèle, mon bijou, raconte à monsieur le capitaine comment ma belle lampe se cassait. Oh, mon dieu, mon dieu, je ne verrai plus ma belle lampe. Oh ! quel malheur ! Quel malheur !*" She began to weep again, at which the visitor suggested more beer.

Mère Bonbon smiled through her tears, and dispatched Eugenia to the cellar again. The first round had hardly

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been sipped, but that did not matter. The profit on every bottle was the same.

Adèle looked sharply at Waterlow before she began her story. She could not help feeling that Milton's behaviour last night was open to criticism. This was his chief, for whom she had often heard her lover express admiration. It would be necessary to rig the tale for him and make the case against Queenie appear as black as possible. She knew that she must keep quiet about Arthur Radcliffe's connection with Queenie, not because of the scandal to the British Legation, but because Milton had impressed on her that the liaison between Queenie and Arthur Radcliffe was his property and not to be divulged for the profit of rival detectives. So her story as told touched but lightly upon Monsieur Milton. It was unfortunate that he had broken Mère Bonbon's lamp, but the *boche* had threatened to shoot up the house and Monsieur Milton for the safety of them all had thought it prudent to warn him that there was somebody inside who would not allow such violence. That he had hit the lamp was her fault, because seeing him with a pistol levelled she had had a *crise de nerfs* and knocked his arm. It was certainly a pity the lamp had been smashed, but it had been an accident, the kind of accident which had been only too common since Queenie had come to live *chez Bonbon*, the kind of accident some might call bad luck, but which she should call something else. It was Queenie who was really responsible for the whole row. She had wanted to frighten away the *ami* who was with her in order to admit her new *ami* the *boche*. And if she had they might all have been murdered last night. Queenie herself was a *boche*. She might vow she was English, but

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it was a lie. If *monsieur le capitaine* would only talk to her himself, he would realize at once that she was not English, but a false and poisonous German spy.

"No, no, I don't want to see her," he interposed. "You're wrong in thinking her a German. She's an English girl."

"*Mais non, mais non,*" all the girls shrilled in an indignant chorus, at the sound of which the grey parrot set out to clamber round his cage and scream out his obscene repertory. Even the dark Roumanian girl next to Waterlow gave up pegging her banana skin with matches and joined in the protest.

"*Ah, mais non, écoutez, monsieur le capitaine,*" said Mère Bonbon, whose enunciation, loosened into excessive wheeziness by her grief over the lamp, had recovered some of its tight fatness. "*Cette Queenie est une vraie espionne. Moi, je la chasserais tout de suite de ma maison ; mais, vous comprenez, elle a payé d'avance trois mois de pension, et je dois faire attention. Elle pourrait se plaindre de moi auprès de la police de cette sale ville. Alors, vous comprenez . . .*"

Waterlow nodded. He quite understood her point of view as *patronne*. She would do well to be cautious, for in spite of what everybody said he still believed that Queenie really was an English girl.

"*Mais non, mais non,*" the girls protested again.

"*Écoutez, monsieur le capitaine,*" Mère Bonbon leant over to pop out confidentially in his ear, patting his arm the while. "*Vous pouvez l'interroger tout à l'heure. Elle est toujours dans sa chambre. Montez, montez, quand vous voulez, je vous en prie.*"

The other girls all looked eagerly at the visitor. They

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were longing for Queenie to be unmasked. The most indolent brunettes became alert. As for Adèle's face, it was sharp as an expectant mongrel's. Her lover's reputation was at stake. It was only his glory she craved. No bitterness would remain against the girl in the next room to hers, should she be proved a German. On the contrary it would be a pleasure to befriend her after she had contributed her handful to the mountain of Milton's fame.

Waterlow still affected to hesitate, and it was only after shrill exhortations *dépister et débrouiller* Queenie, that at last with an appearance of great unwillingness he agreed to question her. And even then he turned in the doorway of the dining-room to ask where her room was and how was he to announce himself.

"*Je vais vous conduire moi-même,*" cried Adèle, springing up from the table and darting forward to show him the way.

With a gesture of resignation he followed her upstairs over the red Turkey carpets, through arches hung with heavy curtains of brown plush, into the heart of the house, which was much cooler than these oppressive stuffs, for it was an old house with thick walls that guarded itself against the sun like the church it parodied.

Adèle rapped with her knuckles on the massive door of Queenie's room. Her little ears which had been resembling bleached shells in whose hollows the powder lay like sand seemed to quiver with eager life when she put her head close to the dark-varnished panel.

"*On peut entrer?*" she cried greedily.

"Come in," a pale voice inside answered.

"*Comme elle est fourbe! Comme elle est trompeuse!*"

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Adèle whispered, "*Elle ne veut que parler en anglais.*" Then she opened the door to admit Waterlow and as quickly closed it behind him.

Queenie, who was sitting up in bed, cried out in alarm and shrank down beneath the sheet.

"Don't be frightened," said Waterlow kindly. "I've come about your passport." He waved the crumpled sheet. "Your friend Arthur asked me to see what could be done for you."

The heart-shaped face broke into a smile; the solemn apprehensive eyes danced with pleasure.

"Oh, I am so glad! Oh, please sit down."

He looked back over his shoulder.

"You don't mind if I bolt the door?"

"No, please, I would be so glad if you would."

Before he bolted the door he opened it quickly and looked along the corridor. Then he called, "Adèle! Adèle!"

The metallic little blonde pecked at him from the entrance of her own room next door like a dingy canary. He told her that Milton would be here presently and asked her to keep him downstairs in the dining-room until he had finished his talk with Queenie. She hurried along the corridor. He came back into the room, shot the bolt, and hung his hat upon the handle.

"And now," he said, pulling the armchair beside the bed, "I want to hear all about you."

"*Ach*, please, my clothes," she murmured shyly. "Give them to me, please."

He picked up from the seat of the chair the flimsy heap and handed them to her.

"Oh, don't bother to do that," he laughed when he

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saw her trying to push them out of sight between the bed and the wall. "They don't shock me."

"Oh, but I am so lazy to sleep all day like this. I am quite ashamed."

"Lucky young woman, to be able to sleep in this hot weather."

"Oh, yes, it is terribly hot," she sighed gravely. "I do not know why it must be so terribly hot."

"I expect you feel it more than the others—after England."

She had been sitting up in bed at ease now, her slim body showing like a warm shadow through the chiffon nightgown, one bare arm adjusting the lace cap that veiled her pale golden hair, the other feeling underneath the pillow for her mirror. At Waterlow's remark she shrank down into the bed and pulled the sheet up under her chin again. Her wide blue eyes stared at him in wistful apprehension; her full red mouth trembled. Looking at her, Waterlow was thinking what a strange mixture she suggested of unearthliness and weak sensuality. Thirty-two? Why, she was hardly out of her teens.

"But perhaps you have been away from England long enough to get acclimatized?"

"Please?"

He had frightened her with the long word as a doctor might frighten an unsophisticated patient with some polysyllabic ailment. He looked at the passport.

"I see you were given this document seven years ago."

She was sitting up again now, and she nodded solemnly.

"Yes, a long long long long time ago," she said, as

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though it were something that had happened in a fairy-tale.

"Where were you given it? In England?"

"No, no. In Constantinople."

"Who by?"

She hesitated.

"By a gentleman," she replied at last. "Somebody. Yes, a gentleman."

The word seemed to have a reassuring effect on her. She repeated it under her breath several times.

"I see," said Waterlow meditatively. "A gentleman. Of course. I know it's a long time ago to remember, but how did it happen?"

"I do not know how it must happen. He has given it to me, so." She offered the gift of a passport with her long white hand to show how it had been made.

"I don't understand, I'm afraid. Did he accost you in the street?"

She flushed indignantly.

"No, please. I am not that kind of a girl."

He leaned over and patted her hand.

"No, no, of course not. I was not suggesting that. But this gentleman? Was he a friend of yours?"

"No, he was not a friend."

"Did you ask him for the passport, or did he just offer it to you as a sort of Valentine?"

She was now quite bewildered.

"Please? I am not understanding very well what you say."

"You don't understand what a Valentine is? You *are* English, aren't you?"

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"*Ach*, yes!" she cried with a wild eagerness. "I am English! I am English! I am! I am!"

And to emphasize this assertion she beat on the mattress on either side of her with clenched fists. Waterlow leaned back in his chair, and watched her agitation.

"Were you born in England?" he asked presently.

"In London, I think. Yes."

"Whereabouts in London?"

She shrugged her shoulders at this unreasonable persistency of his so energetically that the nightgown slipped down on one side and left bare a half of her girlish breast.

"In the middle of London," she said, frowning at the rebellious garment as she pulled it back into place.

"I see," said Waterlow, pleasantly. "In Piccadilly Circus, perhaps?"

"No, I was never to a circus. Never! Never!" she declared indignantly.

"Oh, then it wasn't in Piccadilly?"

"No, I tell you," she said with a sigh for his denseness.

"It was in London."

"Perhaps you didn't stay long in London, eh?"

She smiled with relief at such a nice easy question.

"No, I was taken away when I was being a little baby."

"And that was how long ago?" he pressed.

"Oh, long ago, long ago. I have now thirty-two."

"Thirty-two?" Waterlow repeated incredulously. Then with a smile he looked at the passport. "Ah, yes, of course, that's what the passport says, doesn't it?"

She murmured a prim affirmative.

"Dear me, we live and learn," he murmured. "It's

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very unusual, isn't it, for a woman to make herself out older than she really is? "

" Please? "

It was now his turn to sigh a little wearily.

" I'm afraid you've been living so long in Constantinople that you've forgotten a good deal of your English."

" *Ach*, but I am not always living in Constantinople. *Ach*, no! I have been to many places. To England and to Italy, and to Roumanie, and to Algérie, and to Moscow. Oh, I have been to so many places."

" I'm sure you have," said Waterlow encouragingly. " I daresay you've been to Austria, eh, and perhaps even as far as Germany? "

" No, I am never going to Germany," she cried. " *Ach*, no! I hate Germany. I am hating it, hating it, hating it so! "

Her short upper lip was drawn back in a rictus of agonized revulsion. Yet so soft was that red mouth, so much seeming meant for no more than to be crushed by kisses, so weakly sensual, so passively beautiful, that this grimace of anger was as ineffective as the grimace of an angry child. It was pathetic in its impotence. Yet it appeared sincere, and Waterlow was perplexed.

" Come, come," he said gently. " Don't get excited and hysterical. Well, now, what was your father? "

" He was English."

" I mean what profession was he? What did he do for a living? "

" He was dead."

" Well, then your mother? Was she English? "

With a puzzled frown the girl hesitated before she answered that her mother was nothing.

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"She must have been something," he insisted.

"Oh, I do not know. I do not know," she said fretfully. "She was dead before my father."

"Where did your father and mother live before they died? In Constantinople?"

"No, they were living—they were living to Aix-la-Chapelle."

Waterlow raised his eyebrows.

"In Germany?"

"Oh, but I will tell to you everything. My father is not English, but he is Italian, and my mother who was of Aix-la-Chapelle is dead."

"Your mother was German then," he insisted.

"She was of Aix-la-Chapelle," she repeated almost sullenly. "And when she was dead my father has taken a German woman, and she was beating me always, and I ran away, and a gentleman found me and he was teaching me to dance."

"In Germany?"

"No, no, no, in Dantzig."

"Dantzig is in Germany."

"But these people I am with are Polish peoples."

"And then one day you went to Constantinople and another gentleman very kindly gave you this passport? Was he Polish?"

Waterlow spoke sharply. It had been a mistake to be too gentle with her. It had been encouraging her to tell more lies.

"Come along, answer me please." He drummed on the arm of the chair. "Don't sit there pouting."

She turned on him her big blue eyes brimming with tears.

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"Please? I do not know what you say."

"Tell me the truth, Queenie, that is all I want."

She nodded to herself.

"Yes, I will tell to you what is truth. This was the passport of my sister."

"Oh, this is your sister's passport? And where is she?"

"She was dead."

He clicked his tongue impatiently.

"*Ach*, but I loved her so much. *Ach*, so much, so much!"

And, though the wail was the wail of a child for a missed party or a broken toy, once again Waterlow felt that she had been sincere.

"And how did you find this sister? After you ran away from your home in Aix-la-Chapelle did you go back again?"

Queenie smiled at him. It seemed that the topic of this sister was so dear to her that to whomsoever she should speak of her it would have to be with a smile.

"She was not being my real sister; but I was making her my sister because she was so sweet and I was loving her so much. She was so kind. And when all the peoples said I am so like an English girl she was letting me be her sister. And in Constantinople she would always tell to me that when the war is finished and she will be better we can be going to England together, because she will find us an engagement to dance into the club where we have been before the war."

All this was said with a breathless eagerness that Waterlow's cold voice intervening did not seem to dismay.

"Oh, you have been to England then?"

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"For three months, yes. I am being there with my sister dancing into a club, and that is why I am calling myself Queenie, because the mother of my sister has had a little baby girl called Queenie, who has died, *ach*, so long ago, such a long long time ago, and I am calling her *my* mother, and she is letting me."

"Where is this club?"

"I do not know, but it was a very *chic* club. All the gentlemens were in smokings."

"Were you in Constantinople when war broke out?"

"No, first we are in Constantinople, and then my sister is ill, and I am going to Moscow to make some money, and when the war comes the Russian peoples are calling me a spy, and expulsing me away out of Russia into Roumanie, and from Roumanie I am coming back to Constantinople, and there I find my poor sister is so ill, and she has died."

"And then?"

"First, I was never going with German officers because I was an English girl. But when my sister has died I am going with one German officer." She paused to shudder at the memory before she went breathlessly on. "But it is because I must pay for her to be buried in a coffin; and if I am not giving money I cannot have a coffin for her. And before she was dying she has said to me to be Elsie Walters now, and to go to England and to this house." She put out a white hand and reached for her handbag on the table beside the bed. From lipsticks and powder puffs and loose silver she produced a card which she handed to Waterlow. "You will read that, please."

He read: *Mrs Walters, 42 Rose Lane, Basingbury, Hants.* His brain swirled in a green mist, and in this

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scented room stood a signpost: *To Basingbury 10 miles.* The walls fell asunder for that Basingbury road to roll out its full length before him like a cool drugget over these hot Turkish stuffs. A few yards beyond the second milestone out of Galton began a line of oak-trees in whose leafless branches the nightingales used to sing at dusk at the end of the Easter holidays, and in August there were sky-blue chicory flowers in the dusty roadside grass. Once as a boy he had sat in that grass for the best of an August day and broken flints for a tramp, who had paid him a shilling for his labour and slept under a tangle of bryony, better pleased to earn eighteenpence for doing nothing than half a crown for hammering the sunny hours away. *Basingbury 8 miles. Galton 2 miles.*

"That is her mother," Queenie was saying. "And I must tell to her how poor Elsie has died so far away in Constantinople, and perhaps she will be glad to see me again, because she has been so kind to me in England."

"You're speaking the truth to me, child?" Waterlow asked, in a voice that was almost pleading; for his green thoughts of Hampshire did not want to be obliterated by lies.

"Oh yes, it is so true," she assured him solemnly. "I would not tell to you lies about my sister, because she was so sweet, and now she is dead. She was so black when she died. No one could know her except me." She suddenly put her hands to her face in horror of the picture she saw in her mind's eye. "But I was holding her in my arms so close, because she was not wanting to die. *Ach*, no, poor girl; she was really quite afraid."

The walls of the scented room had closed in again on

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Waterlow. The Basingbury road no longer rolled away before his vision.

"You have not told me all the tale, Queenie," he said gravely. "You haven't told me yet about the juggler you travelled with from Bucharest to Constantinople in September, 1915."

"*Ach*, Zozo is not here?" she shrieked, clasping her hands in terror. "No, no! No, no! He must not be here, I do not want that he is here."

"You see, you haven't told me all the truth, Queenie."

"But I did not think you would like to hear about Zozo," she panted. "He is quite bad. He is quite awful. First when I am in the ballet at La Scala he has taken me from Milano with another girl, and we have made a tour in Italy to be in his act, and after the girl has went away, and I am being alone with Zozo, and we are going to Tunisie and Algérie and in Spain. Then he has made me act when I am tied to a board so that he can throw knives all round me, and then he has taken me to make love with me. And I did not like his love, and he said he would make the knives to go into me and kill me. And I ran away and an English girl has found me at Granada who was called Sylvia. *Ach*, she was so kind! But when I was waiting for her in the train, Zozo has come for me and I have been frightened, and I have let him take me, and he has made love with me for a long time. Perhaps three years. I cannot remember. We are going together everywhere. And he has shooted me in the leg. Look, I will show you where."

She flung back the sheet and pulled up her nightgown to show him a ravelled scar that managed somehow to be whiter than her long white thigh.

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"Why did he shoot you?"

"Because he was being jealous of my sister Elsie. And the policemen have taken him while I am in hospital, and then I have gone away with Elsie."

"But you saw him again," Waterlow reminded her.

"Yes, yes, I will tell to you all things. Do not think that I must say any more false things to you. No, sir, I will not, I will not. Because if Zozo comes to find me here you will help me. Yes? And perhaps hide me, yes? Because he must not make love with me no more." She clasped her hands in an ecstasy of horror. "No, no! Oh, I would die with it if he was making love with me now."

"Why?"

"Oh, because for Arthur. It would be so horrible. *Ach*, yes."

Waterlow contemplated her appearance of utter dismay. Was she acting all this? Was he not being too easily led away by her tale? Why had she kept silence about this juggler with the ridiculous name until he pressed her for the truth?

"Go on," he urged severely. "I'm waiting to hear why you took up with this man again."

"Well, I have told you that for money I have gone to Moscow, because my sister was ill. And then the war has come and I have only a *billet de séjour*, and the Russian policemen have expelled me into Roumanie. And again I had no money. I was at Jassy, and there was a merchant man there. He was nice, but he would not give me money, because he did not want me to leave him; but he was giving me lovely furs, beautiful furs, but not money. And when he was in his business I

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was going every day to the railway station at Jassy to see if in the train perhaps there was an English girl who could help me to go away from this merchant man in Jassy."

Her face broke into a smile. She seemed to be relating an exquisite dream.

"And there was!" she sighed. "It was so wonderful, because it was my friend, Sylvia. And she has taken me away from Jassy to Bucharest. And she was so fond of me and so sweet that I could not tell to her that my sister Elsie is in Constantinople, because I think it would make her sad. Sylvia was really and truly English. She could not go to Constantinople, and perhaps I could not go either, because I had not then a passport. And Sylvia has promised to make for me an English passport. The French girls in Bucharest were always saying that I am a spy, and the Austrian girls were always saying that I am a traitor. And it would have been for me such a wonderful thing to have a passport." Then she shook her head tragically. "But no, she could not make it for me. And after we have not much money in the summer and there were many gentlemen who wanted to go with me; but Sylvia would not let me see them. And then Zozo has come to Bucharest, and he has said to me, 'Yes, you can have an English passport,' and he has shown to me an English passport, but not like mine I have now. Oh, it was so sweet. Like a beautiful little book with a pink inside, and there was a picture of a lion and a horse in gold upon it, and I loved it so much, and I was wanting it so much that I have gone again with Zozo to have it. And I do not know now where is Sylvia anymore. But if you can find her she will tell to you that all this is true.

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Only, she will be so cross with me because I have gone again with Zozo."

"What was Sylvia's other name?"

"Sylvia Scarlett."

Waterlow shook his head. The name was not on his files.

"Well?" he asked. "And what happened after you left your friend Sylvia?"

Queenie's eyes darkened again.

"*Ach*, he was bad, that man! First, we are in Sofia; but then everybody says that soon the Bulgar peoples will make war against the French and English, and Zozo says to a Bulgar man that he will take me with him to make spyings, because I will be English with the passport he has. And this passport is really for a girl who is called Maud, who was in Bucharest, and she was with Zozo as his lover until he has left her and taken me again. 'You shall not take this passport and make spyings against the English,' I have told him. And he laughed. And I am so angry that I spitted on him, and the Bulgar man has laughed, and when Zozo has beaten me for that he has laughed again, but in his eyes I could see that he would like to make love with me, and after when Zozo is not in the house the Bulgar man has come to say that Zozo is nothing, and that he must go to Constantinople to see about his business, and that he is wanting me to come with him. So, I have went with him, and in Constantinople I have found my sister Elsie, and she has died as I was telling you."

"But what became of the Bulgar you went with from Sofia?"

"He has gone away again from Constantinople, which

was for me very good, because I did not like to be with him."

"And why did you leave Constantinople?"

"Because one day the Turkish policemen have come to the Pension and said, 'You will please to go away at once from Constantinople because you are English.' But they did this because the German officer with who I was going to pay for my sister's death has told them that I am making propaganda when I am not wanting to go with him any more."

"And then you were in Salonica?"

"Yes, I have been singing and dancing to the White Tower like I have made here. But one day the English soldiers came to the Pension and say to me, 'You will please to go away at once from Salonica.'"

"Didn't they ask to see your passport?"

"Yes, but I tell them that I have lost it, because I was afraid they would take it and then I would never be able to be in England."

Was she lying? Was she acting? Was all this long confused tale a clever improvisation? Was the whole of this scene an elaborate trick to get a spy into England? No, no, this girl could never be of any value as a spy. But as an intermediary? Yes, she might be used as a messenger.

"You still want to go to England?" he asked.

"Yes, yes, if I can be English. And besides Arthur is wanting me to go. And perhaps in England Zozo cannot come, because he is quite bad, I tell to you."

"You love Arthur?"

"Oh, yes, I love him so much. Since my sister is dead I am not loving anybody. But now I am loving

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him. Only, I am now so afraid that Zozo will find me here."

"You know that Arthur is married?"

"Yes, I know that."

"You know that his wife is with him here?" Waterlow went on.

"Yes, I know that."

"And because you love him you are willing to leave him and go to England?"

"Because I love him, yes, and because I love England so much too, and because I am so afraid because Zozo will find me and take me again."

Was she acting? Was she lying? This evident terror of that juggler with the ridiculous name was in her favour. After all it had been he who had brought this bogey to life for her. Could she be inventing all this fear? It seemed incredible. And yet . . .

"Yet in spite of loving Arthur so much, only last night you were flirting at the Tip Top with a German officer?"

"*Ach*, no! He was offering to me champagne, and I must take it or the manager will send me away. But when he was wanting to come with me here I said, 'no, you cannot come.' It is because I must always be drinking champagne that Arthur wants me to go away from here, because it makes him so jealous to see me with other men."

"But if Arthur were to offer you a pretty little apartment, and give you enough money, you would be glad to stay here, eh?"

She shook her head pensively.

"No, I think I would not be glad, because his wife is here."

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"But why should a little thing like a wife interfere with your happiness?"

She still shook her head, despondently now.

"I would not be happy here way from the theatre and from the cafés if Arthur was not being with me all the time. I would be so dull and *ennuyée* and tired by myself. Even if perhaps I had a dear little dog, a sweet little dog, I would still be *ennuyée, ennuyée*. Oh, yes! And if he has a wife, how could he stay always with me? And I think I would be going with other men, because I am not at all a good girl. I do not take German officers. But I am not at all a good girl. *Ach*, no!" she concluded with this time a most decided shake of her golden head.

Was she lying? Was she acting? It seemed impossible that she was not sincere, and yet should not he for that very reason suspect her all the more? Was not perhaps experience beginning to deceive him? One could become too sceptical; and scepticism carried too far turned into credulousness. He had come to believe by now that the dangerous female spy who lured men to ruin was a myth. But was she?

On an impulse he sat down on the edge of the bed and caught hold of her hand. If this slim golden girl was an enchantress, let her try to enchant him.

"Not at all a good little girl, eh?" he laughed gently. "But a very attractive little girl. Now suppose—suppose—what delicious fingers to stroke—suppose I promised to give you an English passport later on if you became rather fond of me? Would you say 'Thank you,' prettily?"

He could feel her hand curling up as it were within his own like a scorched piece of paper. Her eyes very large and deep gazed at him with an apprehensive question.

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"Fond of you?" she murmured.

He clasped the hand more tightly, for it seemed to have shrivelled in his grasp.

"Why not?" he laughed.

"But I am so fond of Arthur," she whispered brokenly.

"Yes, but that doesn't keep you a good girl. And I'm a much better proposition than Arthur, let me tell you. I haven't a wife round the corner, and I shouldn't be jealous over bottles of champagne. To be sure, I'm not as young as Arthur, and not nearly so good-looking as Arthur. But you must have learnt by now not to be—er—too fastidious."

"Please?"

"I mean to say, you'd soon get used to me. A nice unexacting person like me ought to be easy enough to put up with. I've taken a great fancy to you, Queenie. I would do a lot for you if you'd let me."

"But you are English."

"Well, isn't that your fancy? Aren't you particularly fond of England?"

"You are English," she moaned faintly. "I could not be taking an English gentleman to be my love. *Ach*, no! It would be horrible."

He dropped her agonized hand, frowned at her in perplexity and then noticed with a sudden stab of resentment that she was unconsciously rubbing it against her nightgown, as if to rub away the sensation of his grasp.

"But Arthur is your lover," he said coldly, though he was despising his resentment, since after all, as he kept saying within himself, this love-making was only a pretence to try her.

"But that is why it would be so horrible, because Arthur

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is my love." She fancied he was going to draw her to him and shuddered violently. "No, please, please," she cried. "Don't take my arm, please! Don't touch me, please! If you cannot give me a passport to be English, please then to go away from me, I cannot be going with German mens because I hate them, and I cannot be going with English mens because I am loving Arthur. I must only be going with mens for whom I can feel no hating, no loving, but just nothing at all."

She flung herself down among the pillows in a passion of wild sobs. Waterlow sat moodily regarding her. He was, indeed, having a struggle with himself not to promise her the passport she so greatly desired if only she would cease crying and look up at him with a smile. He was remembering the way he had mocked Arthur for calling her a leaf tossed hither and thither. And yet that was what she seemed, lying here on this bed, a pale gold birchen leaf tossed hither and thither by the winds of war to lie still at last in this windless house, to shrivel and rot at last in this dark airless corner of Europe. Sentiment! Sentiment! That was the devil with these slim golden girls. What did it matter if she were tossed hither and thither? It was her very inability to resist that gave her half this fragile charm. It was sensual weakness that lent her this false virgin air. To yield to such weakness and helplessness would merely be self-indulgence. Still, what he was going to ask her to do was horrible. Sentiment! Sentiment! *À la guerre comme à la guerre!* That was where the French scored. They were cruel as a woman is cruel. Still . . . still . . .

He braced himself.

"Listen, Queenie," he said coldly. "There is only

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one way you can go to England, and that is by earning your right to go there. Do you understand? "

She looked round at him with hostile tear-stained face.

" I will not have you to make love with me. I would be dead first," she declared, and yet she could not give to her resolve the obstinacy it wanted. On those red lips it sounded like a caprice.

" I don't want you to," he said harshly. " I want you to be made love to by somebody who you may possibly think is even more unpleasant as a lover than I should be."

" Who must he be? "

" You love England? "

" Yes, yes. Oh, yes, I tell you. That is true. It is so very true."

" Do you want to help England? "

" *Ach*, now you are laughing at me. How can I be helping England? I am such a silly girl. Everybody is always saying that I am quite silly."

" Yet there is one way in which even a silly little golden girl like you can help England. Listen, Queenie. Last night and the night before you refused to take that German officer home with you."

She breathed the affirmative, shivering.

" How much did he want to go home with you? " Waterlow pressed.

" Oh, very much he was wanting it. He was altogether mad for me. He was like a mad thing last night. He was ringing the bell and shouting for me outside in the street last night."

" Keep him mad," said Waterlow eagerly. " Do you hear? Do you understand?. Keep him mad. Flirt with

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him. Lead him on. Torment him with promises. *But* at the last moment shut the door in his face."

"Oh, yes, yes, yes, I will," she cried, clapping her hands. Her eyes were shining now with joyous excitement, and he, wondering why the deuce there was not a brandy bottle at his elbow, had to turn his eyes from her away for several moments before he went on :

"Until—now listen, listen—until I give you the word. And that word may come to-morrow, or it may come the next day. Do you understand, Queenie? And when it comes you have got to take that German officer back to the Pension."

She was staring at him, her lips parted, her cheeks blanched.

"Now, listen. When he prepares to leave you, you must knock over a glass. The girl in the room next to you must hear this noise. You understand? "

"You mean Adèle? " she whispered.

"That's right. I'm trusting you, Queenie. Just now you thought I was trying to make love to you myself, didn't you? "

"Yes, I was thinking so," she said dully.

"Well, I was trying you. I was trying to find out what you really were, and now—listen, listen," he called sharply, for he fancied she was like to faint. "I believe your story. But that is not enough. You must do something to win your English passport. I promise you that if you can do what I'm asking you to do with this German I will send you safely to England. You can find your English sister's mother. You can be rid of Zozo for ever. He shall not come to England to find you out. I promise you safety. You can be happy in England

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and all this will come to be nothing more perhaps than a bad dream. Do you hear me?"

"Are you going to kill this German?" she asked, her eyebrows meeting in a frown. "If he must be killed, let me kill him. Oh, I am very quick with a knife, because I am living with Zozo once, and he has taught me many things with a knife. He was a very good *prestidigitateur*. He was put so outside the theatre. *Le grand Zozo*, he was always put."

"No, I don't want to kill him," Waterlow said with a smile. And then feeling that if he smiled he might lose the advantage he had gained, he resumed that intense voice in which he had been giving her instructions. "I am not going to tell you what I want to do. But I must know when he leaves you, and before he goes he must somehow spend the time with you. Whatever time he wants you, you must take him."

"But if he is wanting me in the afternoon?"

"Why, then you must take him in the afternoon."

"And how shall I do if he is making me late for my song and dance?"

He adjusted himself to the serious consideration of this problem of theatrical etiquette.

"I'm afraid you'll have to be late, that's all. It won't matter very much if you're going to England, will it?"

She smiled wanly. And then another doubt seized her.

"What will Arthur be saying if I am with this German?"

"Arthur will know that you are working for England. He, too, is working here for England."

She nodded to herself. Then she put out a quick hand.

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"And you also, I think. Yes?"

"No, no," he said gruffly. "I'm working for myself."

The sun had come round far enough to lance through the gap between the top of the curtains and the window-arch a warm ray upon the bed. For the first time Waterlow noticed that what he had thought were playing-cards laid out for some fortune whose revelation he had interrupted were as a matter of fact coloured postcards of famous old pictures—Queens of Heaven, not Queens of Hearts; Saints, not Knaves; Infant Saviours, not cynical Kings; a jumble of the bright glowing visions of a younger world, the scattered leaves of a child's picture book.

"And must I let this German man be everything?" she was asking wistfully.

He turned away from the postcards, from the reds and yellows of the serried costumes, from the clear cool greens of those diminutive peaceful landscapes behind the vivid figures of lilliputian humanity.

"You must make him stay with you. You must not let him go away too quickly. Remember that, Queenie. Remember what you did to get the money for your sister's burial."

"Oh, I have suffered," she moaned.

"Yes, but if you suffer again, it will be for your happiness afterwards." He picked up from the bed a woodland hunting-scene of some old master. "Wouldn't you like to be in such a place?" he asked.

"Yes, I was always playing under those trees," she said. "And look what pretty little horses!"

"It would be like that where your friend's mother lives."

To Basingbury 8 miles. To Galton 2 miles. And dog-

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roses out over the hedges all the way by now, dog-roses innumerable as sea-shells, dog-roses all the rolling way, and the latest loitering oak a full fresh green by now.

"If I must do all things I must do them," she whispered. Then she sat silent, biting her underlip.

"Good girl," he said in accents of conventional relief, and then added quickly with genuine emotion, "brave girl."

"Yes, I must be quite brave," she agreed solemnly.

Her courage made him change his plan slightly.

"Queenie, it would really be better if you could get hold of this German officer at once. If you were clever you might find out from him when he was going to leave here. Get hold of him to-night, Queenie, and . . . oh well, you'll know the way to lead him on. But try to find out what time and what day he is going, and let me know if you possibly can beforehand. I'm pretty sure he won't go until to-morrow and probably not until the day after to-morrow; but still it's better to get hold of him at once."

"Where must I tell you if I am knowing when he will go?"

He wrote down on a torn piece of paper the address of Number Ten.

"Say it to me, please," she asked. "I cannot read very easily what is written with a pencil."

She repeated the address after him half a dozen times.

"And must I break a glass like you said? Because it is not at all lucky, I think."

"No, I've changed my mind about that. I can't trust Adèle as I believe I can trust you." He gazed at her eagerly. She met his gaze, and it was he who looked

away. "Now, one thing more. Not a word of this to anybody."

"I must tell nobody about this German?"

"Nobody," he said earnestly, "I trust you, Queenie. You must tell nobody. Not even Arthur."

"I would not want to be telling him," she moaned.

Then she flung herself face downward among the pillows. Some of the picture postcards slipped over the side of the bed and pitter-pattered upon the floor.

Waterlow rose from his chair and without saying another word walked quickly to the door, took his hat from the handle, slid back the bolt, and left her.

Downstairs in the dining-room he found Adèle still waiting for the arrival of Milton. He told her that Milton must have been detained. She was not to bother any more. He also told her that, if Queenie should bring the German back to the Pension, she was to let Mère Bonbon and the other girls understand that one way to catch suspected persons was to give them rope enough to hang themselves. She was fond of Milton, was she not?

"*Mais oui, monsieur, il est tellement supérieur,*" she declared.

Very well then she might like to know that whatever help she gave Queenie would benefit Milton.

"*Tu comprends, ma petite?*"

"*Oui, monsieur, je comprends bien.*"

Waterlow patted her on the shoulder and left the Pension. The streets were empty in the fierce afternoon sunlight. He walked along the boulevard in the direction of Number Ten, trying vainly to wrench Queenie out of his mind and clear his conscience.

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"Well, if it really is a sacrifice it will not be a useless one like so many in these days. It will give us at any rate an opportunity to know something about von Rangel's movements," he muttered to himself. "After that it's up to us to make the most of that opportunity."

Two peasant girls who were squatting on the pavement in the shade of a false-pepper tree giggled to see this madman muttering to himself in the sun. He turned sharply to scowl at them, and they, crossing themselves, muffled their faces against his malevolent gaze.

How mythical submarines came to seem in this sunny street, amid this acrid dust and the hot reek of those infernal imitations of trees!

In the narrow entrance of the hall of Number Ten he fidgeted impatiently while Stavro flicked the dust from his boots with the feather brush.

"Very good now, Capitaine," said the boy grinning at his handiwork.

"If only you could dust me inside as well as out," Waterlow commented gravely.

Stavro looked anxious. He wished that his beloved Capitaine would not walk about in the sun in the way he did. To come straight off the blistering pavements and make a remark like that was enough to cause anxiety. He had often heard that only Englishmen and dogs walked about in the sun. Stavro watched the Capitaine pass through into Mr Henderson's room, and under his breath he invited the Holy Warrior Michael to keep Satan from this house.

"Give me the card of Queenie Walters," said Waterlow abruptly to the haggard scholar, who ran his thin white grubby fingers along the cards in the box marked

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X.Y.W.Z. and picked out the one he wanted like an intelligent love-bird.

"Do you realize, Henderson, that for all the real truth these cards contain your boxes might as well be used for baccarat? I know far more about this girl now, and nearly all this stuff about her is rot."

"I'm quite sure it is," said Henderson in that high voice of his which, whatever his industry, seemed to come from an Alpine summit so remote from all this garbage. "I'm quite sure everything I've been writing down here since we started is rot."

"You're looking damned ill, old chap," said Waterlow gently.

Henderson gabbled an unintelligible answer.

"Look here," said Waterlow on an impulse to give his chronicler a brief pleasure, "is there any island you'd like to visit particularly?"

Like stars seen clearly for a moment in a rent of fog the scholar's lacklustre eyes sparkled through the darkness of ill-health and fatigue that ringed them.

"I'd like most awfully to go to Delos," he chortled.

"Well, we heard of a submarine sighted off Myconos last month. I'll ask to have you dropped there from a trawler."

"Golly!" ejaculated the scholar. "How scrumptious! I'll live with the shepherd."

"You shall have a fortnight," said Waterlow.

"And what about the card-index and the files?" Henderson queried, with a ridiculous grimace of exaggerated doubt.

"Blast the card-index and blast the files," Waterlow retorted.

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"Them's my sentiments, guv'nor! But . . ." he hesitated. His conscientious painstaking mind was troubled by the thought of anybody else doing his work.

"No good arguing, Henderson. You're going to Delos to look for submarines. Crowder and I between us can deal with anything that *is* important."

"You ought to have a holiday yourself," said the chronicler, smiling affectionately at his chief to show how well he understood the kindly ruse.

"What do I want a holiday for?" Waterlow snapped, and to close the discussion he hurried on to his own room. But when he sat down at his table and tried to put in order his ideas about the various communications and reports before him he found his mind wandering. It seemed hotter this afternoon even than yesterday, and doubtless to-morrow would seem hotter still. He began to count mechanically the animals in that barbaric pattern of the Tree of Life. He began to feel that the whole world of reality was slowly turning into that teeming complication of blood-red and powder-blue. The draped walls of this little room seemed to close in upon his brain. They were all of them part of that pattern—Queenie and Georgie and Arthur and himself, the King and the German envoy, the agents and diplomats, the very beggars in the dusty streets. Perhaps life was always a pattern, but it took war to make such a mad pattern as this. It took war to throw people into such inappropriate and yet somehow inevitable propinquities as these. It took war to intensify every individual's vice and virtue, to heighten his folly and his prudence, his petty absurdity and heroic extravagance, his ignoble vanity, his ache of jealousy and ambition, his cruelty and kindness, his cool grandeur,

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his self-denial and hot greed. Impossible to work this afternoon! Impossible to sit here any longer surrounded by these draperies of blood-red and powder-blue, and beyond them that cluster of seedy spies at the street corner.

He made a fresh effort to concentrate and for a while succeeded in keeping his mind from wandering. Then he decided that he ought to answer his mother's letter of yesterday ; and it was pleasant to spend half an hour in scribbling long unanswerable speculations about the look of the country round Galton, in scribbling long explanations that told her nothing at all at the end of them of what he was doing out here. Then he wrote a letter to Mudros asking for leave to have Henderson dropped as soon as possible at Delos. Then he took a map and marked down with crosses all the possible places at which a submarine might call for Major von Rangel. He examined the snapshot of him taken as he came away from the Palace this morning. Such an ordinary looking creature! So fantastic to ascribe the slightest importance to his movements! And yet he like the rest had been stretched and caricatured by war to be worthy to take his place among those improbable animals brousing beneath the shade of the Tree of Life. He by war was made as fit for hunting as that mild-eyed giraffe! Thus gradually the afternoon wore away until it was time for the poets to present their day's verses. He read through the various accounts of von Rangel's behaviour at the Tip Top last night. No information of any value in all that display of bastard English. Milton had nothing new to communicate since the morning ; and, though he gave himself the pleasure of cursing him up and down for his treatment of Mère

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Bonbon's lamp, Milton's complacency was not affected. Crowder came along about six o'clock.

"Any news of Keats?" he was asked eagerly.

The fat man threw back his head in a Mediterranean negative.

"Well, I'm going to the Other House now," Waterlow announced. "Don't forget you'll have to go up to Number Fifteen after your dinner and see if Keats turns up there to-night with news. I'm dining with the Radcliffes at the Monde and afterwards I shall be at the Legation. I'll come back here later in the evening."

"Right-o, sir," Crowder said cheerfully. After the struggle to get the Bag off, this afternoon had brought him blessed relief. He had slept deliciously since two o'clock. He felt capable now of commanding the Grand Fleet.

"I've sent off the letter about my uniform to my old dad," he murmured with a sheepish grin.

"You have, have you?"

At that moment the agent called Dryden came in with what might be called stop press news. It had been ascertained that the under-porter just engaged at the British Legation had recently been in the company of people virulently active on the other side.

"Yes, I thought he would have been," said Waterlow. It was the habit of his poets to let their creative fancy play round the personalities of people with notes of interrogation after their names. Indeed, he would have found it difficult to think of anybody, about whom a question had once been asked, whose innocuousness had ever been guaranteed by one of his enquiry agents. To his information about the new under-porter Dryden had

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added that he himself had been the object of much attention all day from police spies.

"Well, that's quite right," Crowder endorsed. "There's an extra couple on duty this afternoon at each corner."

When he drove away from Number Ten to the Other House Waterlow noticed at the corner these reinforcements, and when he passed the cafés near the Other House he noticed an air of extra alertness among the loiterers outside.

On entering his bedroom to get out of his sticky clothes and have a bath, Waterlow found lying out on his bed his naval uniform. He rang the bell for Nikko and asked angrily what the devil it was doing there. Nikko was apologetic. He had not expected the Capitaine back so early. He had intended to put the uniform away before he returned. He had taken it out for Mr Crowder to look at and had thought it a good opportunity to brush it and polish the buttons, but Aphrodite had committed some misdeed in the kitchen, and he had not had time to do so yet. Mr Crowder had told him to put the uniform away again at once, but he had thought he should have time to brush it first. Waterlow asked why Mr Crowder had wanted the uniform. Nikko shrugged his shoulders. That he could not say ; but Mr Crowder had been much interested in it. He had counted all the buttons twice over. In fact he had made a picture of them with a pencil, and though he did not want to say anything that might get Mr Crowder into trouble, still he felt that the Capitaine was his lord and master and beloved chief, and that he ought to inform him that Mr Crowder had tried on the coat and looked at himself in the Capitaine's glass. He had been,

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to tell the truth, a little anxious, because Mr Crowder was so much fatter than the Capitaine. Still, English goods were so much better than any others that mercifully the seams had held. If the Capitaine would have the goodness to examine the coat he would perceive that no damage had been done. Waterlow laughed, and seeing his chief laugh, Nikko, whose huge moustaches had been drooping like the stricken boughs of a tree, laughed too.

"Well, I will wear uniform for the Legation show to-night," Waterlow decided aloud. Then he bade Nikko get busy with the brush while he was in his bath. The big Anatolian beamed with pleasure. He had already felt the glorious responsibility of employment under a Capitaine who wore nothing more impressive than a shabby grey flannel suit. But when shortly after six o'clock he beheld his chief for the first time in that uniform he had been reverently tending for so many months, the sense of his glorious responsibility was hardly bearable. He felt that he must rush outside and let off his rifle a dozen times in the air to express in the manner of his people the elation of his spirit.

And Waterlow himself felt a childish elation when he drove past the police spies and saw the consternation upon their unshaven faces. He, too, felt a new pleasure in surprising Georgie so early as this, and a certain amount of curiosity about the effect of his uniform on her. He had tried to pretend to himself for a while when he was lying at ease in a deliciously cool bath that he was going down early to the Hotel du Monde on the chance of interrupting a tête-à-tête with Captain Paul Drimys, and so getting a chance to remonstrate with her over the indiscretion. But now as he drove along through the streets,

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which seemed as if before the sun sank they must dissolve in a fume of hot gold, he was merely aware of how pleasant it would be to sit and talk to Georgie in her civilized room. He felt that there he should be like these stale sun-tortured streets waiting for the cool and merciful evening to come like a grey-robed nurse and soothe their weariness. Had he not been so emotionally tired by his afternoon he might have smiled to think of Georgie as either cool or merciful or healing. But he was tired ; and at this moment he just thought of her as England, and of her room as an illusion of home.

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CAPTAIN Paul Drimys did not go to take tea with Georgie Radcliffe every afternoon in the Hotel du Monde merely for the sake of pumping her about the gossip at the British Legation, nor did he go there merely for the purpose of making love to his pretty young hostess. She attracted him greatly ; but he was not in love with her, or at any rate not enough in love with her romantically to deceive himself into supposing that she could provide him with any valuable inside information about the British attitude toward his own country. So far his visits, which had now extended over a fortnight, had been empirical. He was inclined to think that she would make a charming mistress, but he had had no experience of Anglo-Saxon mistresses. He wanted to feel a little more positive that this apparently cool cynicism of hers would not turn into an exacting sentimentality once the intrigue was consummated, the liaison effected. He had heard it said that these fair northerners misled one into a clinging morass. He did not want anything like that to happen, for he was a man who took his profession seriously. As the King's favourite A.D.C. he might lead the courtier's life; but unlike many A.D.C.s he was also a diligent student of military knowledge and he proposed to become in course of time the Commander-in-Chief, under his royal master, of the Army. When the King did not require his services he offered them to the Chief of the General Staff; his

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trim figure, bright sceptical eyes, obstinate chin, and tight-set mouth under a short black moustache were as familiar at Staff Headquarters as in the anterooms of the Palace. He was like the majority of the royal entourage and the General Staff what is called a pro-German, which meant that he admired the German army, disbelieved in democratic control, and thought that Germany would win the war. Since most people in this world want to be right, he naturally hoped that Germany would win the war, and he tried his hardest to help her to do so. At the same time, in view of the fact that with the command of the sea the Entente could at present more or less command his country as well, he like the rest of his party had to pretend that the prospect of a German victory was as painful to him as to the nations of the Entente. He did his best like the rest of his party to convince the representatives of the Entente that a belief in the invincibility of Germany did not deserve to carry with it the stigma of pro-Germanism; and he like the rest of his party writhed under the patronizing morality of the Entente, and their suggestion that the most modified admiration of Germany deserved some of the odium attached to unnatural vice. The necessity of humouring the power of the Entente was always so galling that no opportunity was ever lost by Paul Drimys or the rest of his party of doing a favour to the Central Powers. Moreover, when the war should come to an end with the victory of those powers, Paul Drimys and the rest of his party hoped that such small favours would be remembered in their country's account, as the mouse's nibbling by the lion. This earnest and ambitious soldier was not quite at peace with his conscience over this philandering with Georgie, because he

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could not persuade himself that he was ever likely to gain from such philandering any practical advantage to his side. He disapproved of wasting his time with her. Last year at this date he had been working hard every afternoon in spite of the heat. Still if he could not extract any news out of her except by a happy accident, he could at least preach the gospel of his royal master's devotion to England. He could at least use her sharp red little tongue to propagate that gospel. It would probably end in her becoming his mistress. But would that matter? To his colleagues he would always be able to claim that he was making business a pleasure, and in his own heart he did not feel that he should ever be likely to forget that all his pleasure was strictly a business.

So, every afternoon for a fortnight Captain Paul Drimys had called about five o'clock at the Grand Hotel du Monde, and had been shown up by the waiter to Mrs Radcliffe's room: each time with a little more *empressement* in the manner of the waiter, who was already seeing himself as Pandarus to this Troilus and Cressida. On three occasions Arthur Radcliffe had returned before the visitor had left, and on none of these occasions had there been anything in the husband's manner to show that he in the least resented such frequent visits. For a man so young as that to be already the *mari complaisant* could only signify that his interest was engaged elsewhere; and it had not taken Captain Drimys long to find out about Arthur's infatuation for Queenie. He had said nothing definite about this to the injured wife so far. He had been reserving some of his ammunition. But this afternoon he was surprised into firing off these reserves. He and Georgie had been chatting away as usual about the

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injustice of the attitude taken up by the members of the British Legation toward the King. Georgie had been agreeing with him over the unfairness of it all. He had grown eloquent over the insults of the Entente to the benevolent neutrality of his country, and at last he had demanded rhetorically in what other neutral country would an organization like Mr Waterlow's be tolerated.

And then Georgie stung him by saying with obviously genuine enthusiasm:

"He's an interesting man, don't you think? And very clever."

Captain Drimys sat up stiffly in that armchair in which the night before Waterlow himself had sat watching Georgie's grace on the long settee.

"He may be interesting, madame," he replied in his perfect English; "I have not met him." And then curling his lip he added haughtily, "I am not likely to meet him. He is clever enough to persuade his government to employ him to waste his time out here; but there surely his cleverness has ceased."

Georgie was flattered by the attentions of this smart and, as she heard on all sides, highly regarded officer; but she had not yet reached the age when the charm of a Southern lover is irresistible. Had it been a question of choosing between Waterlow and Drimys at this moment, she would have chosen Waterlow without hesitation. So that there was for the Southerner a provoking sincerity in her tone when she said:

"Perhaps he is cleverer than you fancy."

Captain Drimys smiled contemptuously.

"I'm afraid that we know too much about his business, madame, to allow that."

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"I wonder if you do."

Captain Drimys frowned.

"Would it surprise you to know that your husband visited his house to-day?"

"Why should it?"

"Or that after your husband left him Mr Waterlow paid a visit to a lady in whom your husband is much interested?"

"Arthur interested in a lady? How very amusing!"

"A common little cabaret girl."

Georgie clapped her hands.

"How like Arthur! He would so enjoy feeling superior."

"I think, madame, that you are simulating an indifference you do not feel."

"Do you?" she said in an icy voice. "I thought I told you yesterday that I was completely indifferent to anything my husband did."

"You did, madame. But are you really so indifferent?" He tugged at his moustache pensively. "I do not believe that you are. I believe that you are a mortally wounded woman."

She laughed with genuine amusement at such a notion; but, because she was remembering that Waterlow had also visited this common little cabaret girl, there was a note of harshness in it which led Captain Drimys to suppose that she might be willing to pay her husband back in kind.

"You are so exceptionally intelligent," he continued in the low voice of profound conviction, "that you are able to hide your feelings. But do you suppose that if I really believed you indifferent I would hesitate . . ." he

half rose from the chair, and then sat down again with the sentence unfinished.

"To do what, Captain Drimys?"

He passed a white hand across his brow with a gesture so carefully studied and neatly executed as almost to seem a product of the drilling-ground.

"No, let that pass and not be spoken," he sighed. "I do not wish to spoil our friendship by an unpardonable indiscretion.

Georgie leaned back in her corner of the settee, fanning herself.

"Oh, but women forgive indiscretions very easily," she murmured. "So do finish your sentence, my friend."

"How sublime to hear you breathe out 'my friend' in that sweet voice! Ah, do not tempt me to say something that might make me unworthy to hear you say 'my friend' ever again."

She fanned herself, thinking what fools men were to suppose that women could be conquered by such antique strategy.

"I suppose you'd pretend to be amazed if I told you I despised my husband?" she said at last, and Captain Drimys, who was thinking what fools women were, did not allow himself to be rattled by the faintly sneering emphasis on the word 'pretend.'

"Without impertinence may I say that you have every right to despise him?" he asked suavely. "Certainly one does not expect an Englishman to appreciate the ultimate possibilities of an adorable woman; but even an Englishman might be inspired by you to explore a little below the surface."

"Oh, I'm very ordinary, really," Georgie assured

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him, closing her fan with a sharp click and smoothing down her skirt as if it were likely to work itself up too far and display too much of such obvious charms. "If you knew me a little better you might even say that I was quite dull."

Nobody, however deep his prejudice against Captain Drimys, could have withheld a moment's admiration for the grace and ease with which, notwithstanding his tight prussian-blue uniform and high saxe-blue collar, his boots and spurs and aiguillettes, he reached the settee from the deep armchair in a single movement and was sitting beside Georgie without even having disturbed the ash of his cigarette.

"If I knew you a great deal better, madame, I would never say that you were dull." Then leaning towards her, he added softly, "nor would you ever say that I was dull."

She gave him an amused sidelong glance.

"Is this the beginning of a flirtation?"

"Ah, but that is unfair," he exclaimed, pitching his cigarette into the fireplace and speaking straight in front of him to the clock-face on the mantelpiece. "You open the door of your room an inch and when I tap very very faintly you ask me if I am searching for the bathroom."

Georgie peeped round the oleander at the door of her room. It was closed.

"Haven't you rushed rather rapidly ahead with your last—er—illustration, Captain Drimys?" she asked, her eyebrows raised.

He still kept his eyes on the clock-face.

"*Pardon*, madame, I had forgotten how easy it was to shock an Englishwoman."

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"Oh, don't be silly," she exclaimed petulantly. "I wasn't in the least shocked. But there is nothing between my bedroom and where we are now?"

He turned round to smile at her, thinking once more what fools women were.

"Only a very draughty and uncomfortable corridor, madame. So you will please pardon me if I say that I prefer to stay where we are now. Before I met you I would have said that friendship between a man and a woman was impossible. You have most delightfully proved to me the contrary. May I not be permitted to enjoy such a delicious novelty?"

"I wonder why you find it so easy to be friends with me?" Georgie asked, thinking once more what fools men were.

"Because you are so exquisitely cold," he replied, more than ever convinced how right he had always been to think what fools women were.

"Why do you imagine I am so cold?" she asked, without taking the least trouble to hide the mark of the piqué.

"For one thing, this attitude to your husband's infatuation for the cabaret girl."

"My attitude toward my husband doesn't show I am cold."

"Then shall I say, the marvellous way in which you secure yourself against the slightest indiscretion of . . . a friend?"

"I did not know one had to secure oneself against friends."

"Then you are not so secure?" he pressed, gazing deep into her eyes.

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"Aren't I?" she murmured, her lips curling up in a faun's smile, her porcelain blue eyes lighting with the wanton fire of which only porcelain blue eyes have the secret.

It was altogether too much for the Southerner who was used to the lustrous passion of brown eyes or the sweet melting of what are called violet eyes, but not to this icy ardour of wantonness.

"Those blue eyes," he muttered thickly. "Those blue, blue eyes."

"*Prenez-vous garde aux yeux bleus*," she sang lightly, and then made a movement to rise from the settee. "Shall I play to you?"

It gave him a chance to put out his hand and touch her.

"No, no, sit where you are and look at me like that," he begged.

"You're talking like a photographer."

"Must I now be mocked?" he asked ruefully.

"Don't you think you deserve to be laughed at, after all that talk about friendship?"

"I would lose that friendship sooner than to become nothing more than a friend."

"Poor friendship," she pretended to sigh. "And I was enjoying it so much."

"No, no, you shall not torment me, my little Georgie," he cried, and kneeling above her he took that light form into his arms to crush it in a long kiss. "*Dieu!*" he muttered in a dazed voice when he sat back in his place again and was staring at the clock-face on the mantelpiece. "*Dieu!* Did I ever say that you were cold?"

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"So, you don't think I am cold?" she asked, more sure than ever now what fools men were.

"The kisses of all the women I have known have melted like snow."

And to do Captain Drimys justice he was now of the same opinion about himself and his fellows.

"There have been lots of other women, then?"

"Why, yes, I am not a schoolboy. But now they are nothing to me. That I swear."

"Don't bother. There have been one or two other men, Paul."

"*Dieu!* I would never have believed that my name could sound so sweet," he gasped.

"No, I always thought it was a frightfully respectable name until now."

"Ah, Georgie, you are so naughty," he exclaimed gleefully and moved to kiss her again. But she shook him off impatiently.

"No more kissing. Arthur may come in at any moment now. You ought to be going. We shall meet again presently at the Legation."

"Listen, Georgie," he said eagerly. "To-night I must drive for business about twenty miles into the country. Why could you not come with me?"

"But I shall have to be at the Legation."

"Ah, yes, and I also. But I will not be going away until after twelve o'clock. And I think you are in the mood for love to-night. There will be a moon and we will be alone together. I tell you it will be a most delicious adventure."

She shook her head.

"You take too much for granted, Paul."

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"You are unkind."

She made a gesture of petulant indifference to the accusation.

"Then please, another kiss," he begged.

"No, no, you must go now," she said irritably. "I can't bear being made love to, leaning out of the window of a train."

There was a tap at the door, and Waterlow apologizing for his disgracefully premature appearance for dinner at half-past eight came round the corner of the high lacquer screen.

"You haven't met Captain Drimys, have you, Roger?" she said with a brilliant smile for the compliment he paid her by his early arrival.

"No, but I've heard a good deal about him," said the newcomer advancing to greet him. But Captain Drimys ignored the outstretched hand. He stood to attention, clicked his heels together, and bowed stiffly.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said Waterlow, and he too brought his heels together for a Teutonic bow. "You must excuse my poor attempt, Captain Drimys; I haven't had as much practice in this style of courtesy as you."

Captain Drimys scowled. Then he clicked his heels again and bent over Georgie's hand. At last he reached the door, unhooked his sword from the peg, and with a final click vanished.

"Georgie, Georgie, you never buckled on his sword," Waterlow laughed. "That was rather an oversight romantically, wasn't it?"

"Roger, how ripping of you to come early like this," she cried gaily. "And I say, uniform does suit you, doesn't it?"

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"In spite of the creases?"

She had come close enough to press with one finger the blue ribbon on his right breast.

"What's that mean?" she asked, looking up into his face.

"That's the medal of the Royal Humane Society."

"For saving life?"

He nodded.

"I say, you're rather proud of that, aren't you?"

"Well, I have to make the most of it, for, as you see, my left breast has not yet been decorated for destroying life."

She was still standing close to him and looking up at his face; but he, though on his way to the hotel he had fancied that perhaps they might resume where they left off last night, now that he had so fair a chance to do so, did not accept it. Perhaps it was finding that fellow here, and yet he had come early on purpose to find him. Or had he? They moved round the screen, and throwing a quick eye at the settee he noticed how clearly the cushions showed that they had been sitting side by side. He ignored Georgie's invitation to sit where Drimys had been sitting and took the armchair.

"Look here," he began abruptly. "What about this fellow Drimys?"

"Paul? Oh, he's a dear."

"Well, don't rob Peter to pay him," Waterlow growled.

"Peter being?"

"Anybody or anything that might be robbed in paying Paul," he told her with a sharp glance.

"Oh, but Paul is really extremely harmless," she said.

"And I can't help thinking that somebody connected

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with the Legation may as well try to be a *little* polite to the people here."

"I see. Trying to help along the diplomatic situation. Well, don't let him pump you too hard."

"I'm not a perfect fool, Roger," she protested. "Besides, what do I know?"

"Nothing. That's the danger. If you really knew anything, you might be tolerably discreet."

"I should be extremely discreet," she declared with an offended pout.

"But knowing nothing, you might easily make a bad gaffe. This fellow only comes to see you every afternoon . . ."

"Every afternoon?"

"That's what I said," he resumed imperturbably. "Every afternoon for one or two things. He either wants to become your lover or he hopes to pick up crumbs of Legation gossip."

"He might find me good company," she suggested, with a toss of her light-brown glinting hair.

"That's included in both alternatives."

"I suppose this is a lecture," she pouted. "Well, now I'm going to lecture *you*. Why do you encourage Arthur to misbehave himself with naughty ladies?"

Waterlow was taken aback for a moment; but he hoped he had not shown it, and shook his head blankly.

"Oh, you needn't be afraid of giving him away. I know all about this lovely creature."

"I suppose you've heard about her from your military friend who has just left us."

She might be bluffing him, but, with the situation as it was, he could not take the risk of rousing her inquisi-

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tiveness with a mystery, since that might mean too much attention's being paid to Queenie by Drimys, which was not at all what he wanted just now.

"Paul isn't the only person who has told me about her," she said. "But don't think I care, please! Why, I haven't even taken the trouble to ask what she's like."

"Well, in this case the most palatable explanation happens to be the true one. Arthur was using his good offices on her behalf to get her passport visé for England."

"Is he tired of her already?"

"I expect that's it."

"She's not working for you, is she?" Georgie asked softly.

He was startled out of his self-possession and answered too sharply:

"Why on earth should she be working for me?"

"Oh, I don't know. I thought perhaps you might have visited her last night as well as this afternoon."

Waterlow damned the police spies under his breath. So, Drimys had already found out about his visit to Queenie this afternoon. That was pretty quick work. He must not run the risk of despising these people. Things began to look unpromising. They might even be smart enough to warn von Rangel against Queenie.

"I went to see her this afternoon on Arthur's account," he said angrily. And she not knowing what was making him angry supposed that she had hit the nail on the head.

"And last night?" she pressed.

"I didn't see her last night," he snapped.

"Oh, well, perhaps it was another pretty lady. You

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know, don't you, they say all the pretty ladies here are working for you?"

"My dear Georgie," he burst out in exasperation, "if I stopped to listen to everything that was said about me here I shouldn't have much time for anything else."

"No, you haven't much time, have you?" she agreed thoughtfully. "It was a pity you were in such a hurry last night."

"Was it?" he asked dully. The picture she had made sitting in the same corner of that settee last night came back to him. He saw her face distorted and flushed like a furious baby's. And then he saw Queenie's crumpled shape buried in the pillows when he left her this afternoon. And abruptly the idea of an intrigue with Georgie became for ever unimaginable.

While they had been talking the sun had set, and that rosy violet glow which unfailingly for a few minutes after sunset touched the white city with a colour more lovely than the loveliest northern dawn had been firing this room with its magic, had been tinting the great chequer-board of house-tops they could see from the windows and staining even more richly the mountains visible far beyond. But now the violet crown had faded, and in the greyness that succeeded Waterlow said rather miserably:

"Look here, I feel a brute for coming so early. Do you want to go and dress or anything? Because I can amuse myself."

She laughed bitterly.

"As you can't find an excuse for yourself this evening to be rid of me, I suppose you want me to find one. How like a man!"

"Look here, Georgie, there's no point in quarrelling

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over this. You know as well as I do how much you attracted me."

"Until you found I was so easy, eh?" she sneered.

"Nothing at all to do with that. I don't know that you are. And I'm not going to try and find out," he added quickly.

"Thanks, you've already made that abundantly obvious."

"After last night you've been at the back of my head most of to-day, and that in spite of having a good many other things of deadly importance to bother about."

"Like chaperoning Arthur's cast-off mistresses to England?"

"I'm not going to be stung into making bitter retorts," he said firmly. "No man of my age, unless he's a bigger fool than I am, plunges into an intrigue with a friend's wife without going over the pros and cons beforehand pretty carefully."

"How delightfully cold-blooded you can be!"

"Naturally after last night I thought a good deal about the future. And naturally I thought about Arthur and asked myself whether it was quite playing the game, and when I heard about this girl I decided that Arthur could look after himself."

"I should think so," she scoffed.

And Waterlow was thinking at the back of his mind what a damned long rigmarole it involved you in to tell a woman that you did not want to do something she felt you ought to want to do; and he was hoping, as a man does, to make the rigmarole sufficiently circumstantial to convince a creature without the elements of logic that a plain physical fact was in reality a complicated mental process.

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"Yes," he blundered on, "though I think one of the disadvantages of having an affair with a friend's wife is the necessity of always being extra polite to the friend."

He looked up hopefully at Georgie to see if this slightly cynical attitude was flattering a belief in her own worldliness.

"You know. Just the kind of extra attentiveness to all your little wants that servants show when they are robbing you. I've always found it a bit humiliating. Though, that wouldn't stop me," he went on hastily, still hoping to flatter.

"You wouldn't have to be very polite to Arthur. He's the kind of man who would be extra polite to you if you were having an affair with his wife."

"No, I don't believe that quite," he said quickly. He was not going to let her justify herself through Arthur, any more than this morning he had let Arthur justify himself through her. "Look here, we'll leave Arthur out of it. The fact is, I don't think I can stand the responsibility of a love affair just now. Georgie, you're clever enough to understand my position, aren't you?" he half pleaded.

He must have attracted her a good deal, for in spite of her hurt pride she softened at once when he spoke in such accents.

"Would it necessarily be such a responsibility?" she asked with almost a warmth of sweetness. "Some women have imagination."

"Oh, I know, they imagine they won't be exacting. But they always are. I never knew a woman yet who didn't try to make adultery as much like marriage as possible."

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"There might be exceptions," she said gently.

That tone in her voice made him long to be simple and sincere with her. She was a wise little thing really. None better able than she to face facts if she would allow herself to despise the paltry pride of sex.

"Never mind about all these stale old arguments," he urged. "The point is this, Georgie. I came early this evening to see you alone. I put on this uniform in the way a peacock spreads its tail because I wanted to make an effect. As I drove along in the car I was as excited as a schoolboy at seeing you again. I meant with all my heart to make love to you. But now that I'm here some unearthly reason keeps me from doing it."

"Perhaps you're thinking of cutting Arthur out with that girl of his. It must be so much more amusing to take away what another man values, or at any rate what he thinks he values at the moment."

"But Arthur's tired of this girl," said Waterlow quickly. And it did not strike him that he was avoiding a direct answer.

"Is he?" she said in a low voice. "I wonder."

He was pondering, unlike his predecessor, the diabolical cleverness of women. Then he recovered himself to say :

"You surely don't think I've fallen in love with that girl of Arthur's? Now, that's really quite funny. If you only knew what I said to her this afternoon."

"But you see, I don't. So it's not much use telling me, is it?"

"No, I suppose not," he sighed. "Though I wasn't trying to tantalize you."

She laughed with exaggerated mirthfulness.

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"Oh, I imagined you had been trying to tantalize me ever since last night."

He fell back on a man's last line of defence.

"You don't seem to realize that I've been absolutely sincere with you, Georgie."

"Oh, yes. You've been sincere enough. Almost painfully sincere."

"And that means a tremendous lot to me just now, when I spend my whole time listening to lies and telling them."

"I see. You're really taking a kind of moral cold bath at my expense."

"But why be angry with me for assuming that you were a sensible woman?"

"Good God," she half screamed. "What woman wants to be considered sensible? You might as well tell her she had thick ankles. Sensible! Why, I haven't even pretended after last night that I never meant to let you make love to me."

"That's exactly why I thought you were so sensible, and why I was able to be perfectly sincere. Georgie, don't let's make this into a quarrel. Perhaps what really happened was that I saw you sitting here in this room you've managed to make seem so much you, and looking so jolly and sure of yourself, and—oh, I don't know—so altogether different from the kind of people I have to spend my time with that I didn't want to spoil it."

She leapt up from the settee.

"No, damn it," she cried, "don't start being sentimental at the end! That really will be more than I can stand."

He nodded slowly.

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"Yes, I suppose it did sound a bit sentimental ; and yet I think I got nearer then to the truth than at any time since I arrived this evening."

It was as well for both of them that Arthur came back from the Legation at this moment. Another few minutes of this conversation might have made it impossible for Waterlow to remain to dinner, to such a state of exasperated emotional fatigue were they both reduced.

It must have been evident to Arthur that something was the matter ; the quick suspicious glance he threw at them, and the way he told Georgie that she had better hurry with her dressing showed how much astonished he was to find them together. He occupied himself with the mixing of cocktails until his wife's door had closed behind her. Then in the middle of shaking the mixture he stopped to ask sharply over his shoulder what had put Georgie in such a bad temper.

"Was she in a bad temper?" Waterlow parried.

"Oh, I suppose not more than usual," the husband said almost under his breath as if he were trying to reassure himself.

"I'm afraid I made a nuisance of myself by arriving so early."

"Yes, you were rather early," Arthur agreed. He poured out a drink for his guest and offered it, with an air of dismissing the dark fancy which had passed through his mind. "Well?" he asked eagerly. "What about Queenie? Are you going to help her?"

"You're very full of questions this evening, Arthur," said Waterlow with a touch of irritation. "And good heavens, man, what have you put in this cocktail? It's the strongest thing I ever held to my lips."

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"There's only a dash of absinthe in it."

"A dash you call it? I should call it the Arizona dam."

"Now, don't pretend *you* can't tackle it, Pirate," the host laughed. He was evidently trying hard to recapture his professional ease of manner and lend to the dinner-party this evening an illusion that it was one of the many pleasant little dinner-parties in the small and intimate society that diplomacy creates for itself in the lesser capitals of Europe. Unfortunately, Waterlow, in his present mood, chose to take the remark as a hit at his own weakness and put the glass down angrily.

"You won't loosen my tongue that way," he said with a scowl.

Arthur grew desperately polite and begged to be allowed to mix him another, but his guest declined.

"Do tell me, are you going to help Queenie?"

"That depends on her," said Waterlow shortly.

"I went round to the Pension just now, but she sent word she was lying down with a bad headache and begged me not to come up."

"What the devil do you want to go round to the Pension for?" Waterlow flamed. "Look here, Arthur, either you've put that girl's future into my hands or you haven't. If you have, I'll be much obliged if you'll keep out of her way for the present."

Arthur stammered an apology.

"Even a junior Third Secretary ought to know better," Waterlow went on furiously. He was rejoicing in the chance to give vent to his pent-up anxiety. "You handed the girl over to me. Kindly don't interfere any more in the matter. Her passport to England depends now on me and what she can do for me."

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"Very well," said the younger man, "but there's no need to lose your temper. And if you talk so loudly Georgie will hear what you're saying."

"What the deuce do I care whether she does or not? She knows all about you and this girl, if that's any relief to your conscience."

"Knows all about her?" Arthur repeated in dismay. "Do you mean to say you told her?"

"Of course I didn't tell her."

"Then who did?"

"My good man, if you can't find out who is and who is not in your wife's confidence, you're certainly not going to employ my professional services to find out."

"Well, I must go and dress," said Arthur helplessly. "Vane-Howard's dining with us to-night. Nobody else."

He left Waterlow, who walked over to the window and sat on the sill to watch the dusk deepening over the roofs of the city. One was high up on this storey of the hotel. This was the best hour of the twenty-four, when the ruthless sun was at rest, this velvety assuaging hour before the streets were ablaze with the maddening silver of the moon. And while he sat on the sill, staring out across the grape-dark scene and wondering why Queenie should care so much for Arthur Radcliffe, and then forgetting all about Arthur, all about Georgie, all about this room, this dinner-party, the reception at the Legation, everything, in a dream of Queenie's successful snaring of von Rangel, down in the room at the Pension Bonbon Queenie herself was dressing to go out to dinner with Adèle.

She liked to be early at the theatre. The girls might jeer

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at her in the dressing-room, but she preferred that to being alone through the evening until it was time for her to dress and come tripping on to the golden stage. She did not look capable of tripping anywhere at this moment. Indeed, she barely seemed a creature of flesh and blood at all, but rather the ghost of some bygone occupant of that scented room. The very frocks she took from their hangers in the wardrobe and laid out upon the bed had more life than she; and when finally she chose one of champagne *crêpe-de-Chine*, and to wear with it a large black picture hat with a cream-dyed ostrich plume, the frock and the hat seemed to go out of fashion when she put them on, to be perhaps the costume of a *Traviata* in the dressing-room of a forgotten opera-house, and even as real a creature as that, only because she had painted the ghostliness out of her face with rouge, and by blacking her eyebrows and lashes given her deep blue eyes a deceptive lustre of eager ardent life.

It was not the prospect of being separated from Arthur which had thus overwhelmed her. Her mind, indeed, was hardly capable of imagining anything it had not experienced. She knew that to live in an apartment by herself would be intolerable, because she had already lived in such apartments. There had been that merchant at Jassy who had left her with nothing to do all day except try on the furs he had given her. She had found the boredom of it insupportable, and now that she had experienced the pleasure of looking forward to a man's company every day she was able to imagine how dull it would be not to be visited every day by Arthur. Even in the Pension she had begun to dread that ennui. But complete separation from Arthur by the adventure of

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going to England was another matter. England to her fancy would prove a delightful substitute for Arthur. Most of her longing to be English was due to her having enjoyed herself in England more than in any other country, so that when people told her that she was like an English girl she was flattered and pleased. The necessity of giving her favours to a German officer in Constantinople had been a genuinely terrible experience, and she supposed that this necessity now laid upon her afresh would be an equally terrible experience, yet her feeling for Arthur played relatively a small part in this dread. The embarrassment and distaste she had suffered when she thought Waterlow wished to make love to her had not been so much due to the idealism of love as to a superstitious dread of tempting fortune by the conquest of two Englishmen at the same time. There was, however, at the back of her mind something worse than parting with Arthur, and that was the prospect of once again falling into the hands of the juggler. She was physically blunted. She could not have led the life she had without becoming insensitive. But Zozo represented every time he re-entered her life a new violation, because, having really not developed since she was a child of fourteen, she preserved as the great horror of her life that first experience with him. It was the mention by Waterlow of the juggler which had made her agree to do anything he wanted, since she could not believe she would be safe from Zozo anywhere except in England. When at Bucharest he had lured her away from the protection of Sylvia with the English passport her English friend had failed to obtain for her, it had been because she fancied that once in possession of such a passport she should have

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an amulet to guard her against Zozo himself. Her childish mind was incapable of foreseeing contingencies. The sweet was offered to her and she snatched at it. By luck that might not be repeated she had escaped from him again. But should that man with his large yellow face and huge hands surprise her this very night and stand looking at her as he used to look at her, with the tip of his tongue in the corner of his heavy lips, look at her and say nothing, but just slowly nod his head, with that close-cropped hair like the fur of a rat, she knew how certain it was that she would quickly do whatever he bade her.

So all that hot afternoon she had been lying on her bed in a collapse of terror. When Arthur, in spite of his vow last night, had called at the Pension again she had sent down word to refuse his visit, because she was afraid that he might have changed his mind about her going away, that he might insist on her staying and withdraw his help over the passport. And to stay here now with the shadow of Zozo creeping over her life again appalled her. To get away from here . . . to get away . . . to get away . . . a . way . . . a . way . . . away !

While she had been lying on the bed with this resolve hammering itself upon her temples she had heard a stir of something in the wardrobe. Her breath had stopped. The door of the wardrobe had slowly opened. She had uttered a wild shriek and beaten on the wall of Adèle's room for help. And the large black Pension cat had walked out and lazily stretched himself. To Adèle when she came running in Queenie had sobbed out a tale of a terrible dream she had had, relating to her neighbour things about the juggler which were real memories, but which she told as part of her dream. Adèle had thoroughly

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enjoyed this feast of sexual horrors, and her opinion of Queenie rose. A girl who was capable of such exciting dreams had something to be said for her as a companion, whether she were a spy or not. Adèle was even inclined to wonder if perhaps the devil actually might not have entered that big black cat, and she crossed herself several times before she had ventured for Queenie's peace of mind to chase him from the room. And when Queenie had begged her to dine with her to-night and said that she wanted to be early at the theatre Adèle had been almost affectionate. But Queenie had been so long deciding what dress to wear that Adèle had grown impatient and told her to come on to the Café Apollo when she was ready. Dinner must be ordered now if she was to be at the Tip Top in time for her early turn.

Queenie, discontented with her looks, had just rubbed off the rouge for the second time and was sitting in front of her glass, making a third attempt to evoke that blue-eyed doll so many men desired, when Waterlow at the Hotel du Monde realized that somebody had come into the dark room and sat down at the piano to play snatches of Granados.

"Oh, my dear man, how you made me jump!" Vane-Howard exclaimed, when above the rhythm of a Spanish dance he was suddenly greeted in the darkness.

At the same moment down at the Pension Bonbon somebody came quietly into Queenie's room and touched her on the shoulder, and she leaping up with a cry let her hand-mirror fall and smash.

"Ah, please do not be frightened, my pretty little girl," said Major von Rangel. "But come," he added, for Mère Bonbon prompted by Adèle had confided in

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him the certainty of Queenie's origin, and sent him upstairs with bawdish encouragement. "I think we will speak in German together."

So great was her relief to find it was not the juggler who had caught her like this, that she answered him naturally in a language of which she had refused to utter a word for over two years, answered him too in a different tone from last night's, for he was to offer her the way to escape from Zozo for ever. The Major was obviously gratified by her manner. He had come, he explained, to invite her to give him the pleasure of her company to-night. He hoped she would be kind, for he was going away soon and he wished to carry back with him to Germany a souvenir of the warm South. No German who has even seen an orange-tree growing in the open-air can help being sentimental over his experience. A place in the sun was a more literal expression of an aspiration than their enemies supposed. Yes, he went on, his stern eyes melting like butter in the warmth of his feelings, he wanted to carry back with him to the North a memory of this moonlight, and he could think of no sweeter memory than a night of love with this angel-haired little girl. So he had contrived a plan, which he hoped his little blue-eyed love would help him to carry out. That plan was a drive by automobile to a restaurant he had heard of about twenty miles from the city, where, in a private supper-room, they could be undisturbed and where together they could sit by the edge of the sea and drink in, with beating hearts, the beauty of this sublime southern night. Queenie mechanically responded to his amorous elation as in the past she had responded mechanically to the same symptoms in many other men. Major von Rangel was delighted,

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In his present mood he was as incapable of criticizing such ready-made passion as he was of criticizing the ready-made suit he was still wearing. He caught Queenie to him and spluttered forth guttural diminutives. His little blue-eyed love must wait for him and presently he would come back for her in the automobile. The horn would sound three times beneath her window. It would sound like Siegfried's horn, he spluttered goggling, and she would find him waiting to carry her away into the wonder and beauty of the night. *Ach*, but she could not miss her song and dance, Queenie declared; the manager of the Tip Top would never forgive her. Major von Rangel fumbled in his pockets and produced bank-notes. He was not the man to expect such a lovely little doll to exist on kisses. How much did she want? He was generous. One desired to be generous in these days of war when at any moment one might be parted for ever from one's heart.

What was it the Englishman had told her to find out, Queenie was asking herself. The time! The time! That was what he had wanted so much to know.

"But are you going away to-night?" she asked, and the exaggerated innocence of her wide eyes did not seem exaggerated to the fond soldier, who laughed jovially.

"Do not let us talk of going away. We have to-night for love."

"But if I cannot go on for my song and dance," she argued, "I must tell the manager. I will go to the theatre, and perhaps you will come for me there in the automobile, yes?"

He frowned.

"*Ach*, you wish to play me the same trick as you have played last night."

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"If I wish to play you a trick I need not go to the theatre to play a trick. If you leave me here I can go to the theatre or stay here. It will be very easy for me."

The time! The time! The time! She must be given an exact time so that she could warn the Englishman.

The Major sighed sentimentally.

"Yes, that is true. I can trust to your kindness? Do you love me a little? Will you be kind to me?"

The time! The time! The time! She could hear above his amorous grunts the ticking of the clock on her dressing-table. The time! The time! The time!

"You will break my heart, my little love, if you play me false," he was spluttering earnestly.

"I will not do that. I will come to you at the gate of the Tip Top, but you must tell to me the time. I cannot be standing there in the road, because everybody will be staring at me. And perhaps they will call out to me that I am a *sale boche*."

"It is good. I will be in the automobile by the gate of the theatre at a quarter-past ten."

"And where is it you will take me?"

"I will tell you where we go when we are there," said the Major.

She did not dare press him lest he should become suspicious. Never mind. She knew the time; and she knew that it was a restaurant beside the sea. Now soon perhaps she would be a real English girl. The thought of this strengthened her to give von Rangel a farewell kiss that would make him mad for her, so mad that he would let nothing interfere between him and the night when she and her lips should be his own.

She watched from the window the soldierly form that

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looked so stiff in its ready-made suit striding along the lamplight of the narrow street toward the big boulevard. The moon was not yet high enough to rule the city with her silver.

Just as the party of four in the Grand Hotel du Monde went down to dinner Queenie left the Pension and, hailing a carriage, told the man to drive her to the address the Englishman had impressed upon her. There was nobody at Number Ten except Stavro, who invited her to come in and wait until Mr Crowder returned from dinner.

"But it is Monsieur Waterlow that I must see," she explained in agitation.

Stavro insisted firmly that the only way to see the Capitaine would be to wait until Mr Crowder came back ; and Queenie, not knowing what else to do, agreed to wait. She found herself left alone in a small room in which when the door was closed she could see nothing except that pattern of the Tree of Life. She began to feel frightened. Like a child her eye was easily wrought upon, and these animals and birds innumeraibly repeated in the mazes of that blood-red and powder-blue jungle wrought upon her nerves. For a long time the silence was intense ; and then it was broken by a sound that was horribly familiar, the sound of a knife being taken gently backward and forward over leather. Zozo! That was the way he used to sharpen his knives. In a fever of terror she tried to find the door, and when suddenly she came across the handle as she felt her way round the draperies she thought it was his huge fist and screamed. The noise brought Stavro to see what was the matter. He came in, carrying a boot in one hand and a knife in the other. She told him how a sound in the passage had frightened

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her and squatting down cross-legged he showed her that it had only been the sharpening of his knife on the sole of his boot. Courteously anxious to allay her fears and demonstrate that he was not a villain with intentions on her life, the boy produced from his waistcoat the icon of a swarthy angular Virgin crowned with pinchbeck.

"Very good," he explained. Then pointing to his heart he added: "Stavro very good," after which he kissed the icon reverently and put it back in his pocket. Something in the boy appealed to Queenie. She was reassured and smiled at him, and for a while they sat smiling at one another—two children. Presently she took the knife and the boot from him to show how well she herself knew how to sharpen a knife. He was loud in praise of her skill, and gradually in a queer mixture of broken languages they fell to exchanging confidences about their two lives. She related how she had had a brother like him once, whose name was Francesco, and how she had lost him, oh, so long ago, and had only seen him once again passing her quickly in the streets of Milan, and how he had called her by name and how she had called back; but that was all. Stavro shook his head at this. He had had a sister in Anatolia, a little sister very beautiful, and then one day the Turks had killed everybody in the village and carried his little sister away; far beyond the mountains, perhaps as far as Angora. He should never see her again. She would be the slave of a Turk now who, when he would, might go in to that little sister. It was not good, that. He pricked his palm with the point of the knife.

"Very much sharp," he said contentedly. "Very good for Turks."

While Queenie was waiting at Number Ten for some-

body to come in and tell her where Waterlow was, Waterlow himself was sitting on Georgie's left at the table in the hotel dining-room and thinking how comfortable it would be to change places with Vane-Howard, not at this table, but in life. Yes, how pleasant to be Vane-Howard, with his thin distinguished face and monocle, and drawling voice and musical talent, with his money and his easy future and secure position in the world. The war meant more work for him ; but it would also mean quicker promotion and the chance of a C.M.G. long before he would ordinarily have gained it. At the end of the war if he wished to retire he would be able to do so ; if he wished to find himself still *en poste* that would be equally easy. For him the war was not an opportunity he ran the risk of wasting. And the host and hostess, what a pair of fools they were ! Why did a woman like Georgie marry into this ordered exclusive life if in her heart she hankered after the insecurity of a *cocotte* ? It was difficult to forgive such vicious self-indulgence. And Arthur, why had he not the strength of will to keep her on these well-laid lines ? Why must he go flattering his masculine pride at the expense of somebody like Queenie ? Why could he not perceive his contemptible weakness and set about its cure ?

The small orchestra in the gallery was playing the usual condimental music that helped the appetites of these rich, comfortable, secure people in the big dining-room of this rich, comfortable, secure hotel ; all of them guzzling and chattering to the accompaniment of a sugary tune that seemed to think it was expressing something passionate and significant to which these opulent livers and impoverished hearts could respond.

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"Our Jolly Roger is serious to-night," Vane-Howard observed.

"He's very tired, poor man," said Georgie, smiling her hate. "I'm afraid he's had a very tiring afternoon."

Arthur glanced up at his wife with a frown.

"Do look at Buckie over there," murmured Vane-Howard, feeling that their table needed something more than music this evening. "My gad! he's going to have a bottle all to himself! What can have happened? He's turning blue in the face with unsatisfied greed. I never saw anybody get such a length of asparagus into his mouth. No, really, it's worth watching. It's too marvellous! I believe he'd eat the root if they left it on."

The Military Attaché was enjoying his solitary dinner with a Germanic thoroughness. It was, as Vane-Howard said, marvellous to see the way he was able to devour those great etiolated stalks, and to leave of each one nothing except a few buttery fibres.

"And Buckie was being quite sentimental this morning in the Chancery over the rights of small nations," Vane-Howard drawled.

But no witticism of the Second Secretary's could enliven that dinner-party. In the minds of three of the people at that table an orchestra of thoughts was playing too many distracting tunes.

It was a sign of the malaise which had clung not merely to the dinner, but even to the cognac and coffee in the hall afterwards, that they were among the first arrivals at the Legation. Madame Nadegine, the smart little English wife of the Russian Military Attaché, who had been dining with a party at her Minister's table, came up

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before they left the hotel to know if they had seen anything of her husband.

"Sacha *is* so naughty. He was supposed to be dining here with the Minister. And not a sign of him. The Minister is simply furious."

"Ah, these truants," Waterlow murmured to Georgie. She looked round at him over her shoulder and said bitterly:

"Husbands are not the only truants."

He bowed his acknowledgment of the thrust, and they passed on to the car.

"Shall I sit in front with Arthur?" he asked.

"Oh, I couldn't bear you not to," his hostess answered with ironical courtesy.

After they reached the Legation, Vane-Howard went into the Chancery to see if there were any late telegrams. Waterlow stayed behind in the hall to watch the arrivals, leaving Arthur to take his wife up the curved marble staircase, at the head of which Sir Frederic and Lady Ovenden were receiving their guests. His reason for doing this was not a desire to escape from Georgie's company, but to seize an early opportunity of telling Scrutton to keep an eye on his new under-porter, who, though he was on duty in the gentlemen's cloakroom, had already in a few minutes made an excuse to go along twice to the Chancery.

"Do you want anybody?" he asked the man sharply when he noticed him for the third time at the entrance of the corridor that led along to the Chancery.

"I was going to see if Mr Amberley or Mr Vane-Howard was wanting me, Captain Waterlow," the cadaverous young man replied greasily.

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"Well, I'm quite sure they don't. So you'd better go back to your cloakroom."

Waterlow decided that he was already much too familiar with all their names. He would have him out of this job to-morrow. He did not intend the British Legation to entertain a Keats.

In the hall Monsieur Lolivrel the French Minister, a fat fussy self-important little man, whose pot-belly did not set off the scarlet ribbon of the Legion of Honour, was talking to Monsieur Jovanovitch the Serbian Minister, a genial sheep-dog, whose beard sheltered the White Eagle and whose not too clean shirt-front was encircled with a positively grubby pale-blue and white ribbon of St Sava.

"*Et comment se porte Madame Jovanovitch, cher collègue?*" the Frenchman was enquiring.

"*Merci, elle ne se trouve pas trop bien, Excellence. Vous savez, la chaleur.*"

"*Ah, c'est inouïe,*" declared Monsieur Lolivrel, puffing indignantly.

Madame Lolivrel now appeared from the ladies' cloakroom, a well-corseted, many-chinned woman in glittering black, with a large spangled fan.

"Ah, Madame," the Serbian Minister barked, bending over to kiss her hand.

"*Et Madame Jovanovitch?*" Madame Lolivrel enquired, as if the husband had hidden his wife with the White Eagle under his beard.

"*Malheureusement elle est un peu souffrante ce soir.*"

"*Alors vous êtes seul,*" said Madame Lolivrel, with the air of having cleverly solved a difficult problem of subtraction.

"*Oui, Madame, je suis seul.*"

"*Ah, je suis fâchée,*" Madame Lolivrel condescended.
 " *Pauvre Madame!* "

"*Eh bien, montons,*" the French Minister snapped, and followed by the Serbian he and his wife ascended the stairs just as Scrutton opened the door to admit General Arcucci, the Italian Military Attaché, with a handsome dark wife.

"*Ti aspetto qui, cara,*" he told her as she moved toward the cloakroom.

The door opened again, and Colonel Nadegine, the Russian Military Attaché, in his dark green uniform covered with orders, entered. He was an extremely tall, very slim, sandy-haired man with a high narrow head, always bubbling over with good spirits and prancing about like a harlequin.

"*Bon soir, mon général, ça va ?*" he asked, beaming at his Italian colleague.

"*Ça va bien, mon colonel.*"

Amberley, looking as incredible as the Chevalier d'Orsay in the perfection of his evening-dress, came out of the Chancery; and Waterlow, still unnoticed by anybody, withdrew farther into the shadow of the palms grouped round the curve of the staircase.

"Hul-lo, General! Hul-lo, Nadegine!" he exclaimed with an exquisite cordiality. "Where's Madame Nadegine?"

The tall Russian beamed.

"I have lost my poor little wife! I was playing tennis with Prince Basil. My god! he is a damned bad player, Amberley. But she will come soon, I think. She was dining at the Monde with my Minister."

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"Perhaps they're here already. I've been doing a little work in the Chancery."

"My god," Nadegine cried, waving his arms in mock despair, "the work you do here!" Then becoming confidential he seized Amberley's arm and drew him close. "But I cannot understand what is England doing for the war. My wife gets quite mad with me when I ask her that. But what for the devil is England doing?"

"Oh, we're trotting along slowly but surely, don't you know," said Amberley. "There was quite a genial communiqué this evening. Did you see it, General?" he asked, turning to the smart Italian.

"*Ottimo!*" the latter exclaimed, rubbing his hands. "*Je suis très content. Si incomincia!*"

With this expression of polite optimism he joined his wife and passed on upstairs.

"These Italians are so bloody serious," Nadegine bubbled with derisive laughter.

Amberley looked round in alarm.

"Hush! Hush!"

"No, but, my god, they take themselves too seriously altogether," the Russian insisted. "And what they do? Nothings! They cannot fight even the Austrians."

Music was now heard above, and to Amberley's comparative relief Nadegine began capering round the hall. Then the door opened, and his pretty English wife arrived, escorted by one of the young Russian attachés. Her husband at once rushed up and embraced her.

"Ah, my wife!" he shouted. "My wife! She have not eloped. Oh, I am so very contented."

"Will you behave yourself, Sacha," Celia Nadegine

expostulated. "You really are the most dreadful clown. And I say, where on earth did you get to this evening? The Minister was furious you didn't turn up to dinner."

"My god!" her husband cried, beating his head in mock despair. "I was playing tennis with that plum pouding Prince Basil."

"Take him away, Celia," Amberley groaned.

"My dear Charlie, he's not fit to be left alone. Now really, Sacha, please stop playing the fool. I won't be a moment powdering my nose."

The door opened again to admit the French Military Attaché in general's uniform, and the French Naval Attaché with the gold lace of a *capitaine de vaisseau*. The latter was a little fair man, with hardly more discretion than Nadegine himself. Regardless of having entered the Legation he did not break off his observations on the behaviour of the Court to which he was attached.

"*Je vous assure que ces sales gens ne meritent que d'être . . .*"

But his colleague checked him.

"*Attention, mon cher, attention!*"

The French Naval Attaché rushed up to Nadegine, as usual exploding indiscreetly.

"*Ah, ce roi traître, ce roi ignoble! Je disais à mon collègue que nous devons absolument le chasser de sa royaume.*"

"If we drive out the King, I hope we will drive out that plum pouding Prince Basil also. My god, what a tennis player! Not a ball can he hit!"

Waterlow, perceiving that Amberley was getting un-

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comfortably nervous at what would be said next, created a diversion.

"My god!" Nadegine shouted, holding his hands to his eyes against the apparition. "I did not recognize him. Ah, my dear Pirate, I am so glad you are here." He shook him warmly by the hand. "What you do with all your spies?"

Then he patted and fingered the uniform. "*Mais, quel chic!*"

Waterlow began to think that he would have done better to remain in obscurity.

"Come here, my dear Pirate," Nadegine continued; and, slipping his arm in Waterlow's, he took him along the hall to where they could see amid the throng upstairs various figures in the uniform of the country.

"I think you will kidnap all the General Staff to-night, *hein?* I will make myself a black moustache and help you, *hein?* But don't you know my French colleague? *Eh, eh, mon général,*" he cried, beckoning to the French Military Attaché, "*permettez-moi que je vous présente mon ami le roi des montagnes.*"

The Frenchman bowed coldly to Waterlow, who presently, after a general move upstairs, found himself for a moment alone in the hall. He went over to Scrutton.

"Is that the new under-porter?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, sack him to-morrow."

"Can he be trusted with the coats, sir?" Scrutton asked anxiously.

"Oh, I don't suppose he'll meddle with them. But don't let him keep sneaking along to the Chancery."

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"No, sir, I won't. Excuse me, sir."

He went to the door and admitted the Chief of the General Staff, a fierce little nail-brush of a man, accompanied by Captain Paul Drimys. Both of them passed Waterlow without acknowledging his bow; and when they were handing their swords and caps to the new under-porter, he fancied that he saw a meaning glance pass between the newcomer and Drimys. At that moment, however, the British Military Attaché came portentously along from his room, which was off the corridor on the other side from the Chancery. He was carrying a sheet of foolscap in his hand.

"Oh, bon soir, bon soir," he said, greeting the two officers. "C'est intéressant ici ce papier. Je suis devenu général."

"*Pardon?*" the puzzled Chief of Staff asked.

Captain Drimys was quicker.

"You have been promoted, perhaps? Ah, my congratulations, General," he said cordially.

"Yes, I've just received the telegram," the new Brigadier announced. "Well, I'm glad for one thing; I found it very difficult dealing with a French colleague who was made a general last month and didn't forget to rub it in. And then last week the Italians made their man a general too. So, it was really imperative I should be promoted to equal rank."

"And Colonel Nadegine?" Drimys asked maliciously.

"I shouldn't mind if they made him a Field-Marshal. It wouldn't give him any more sense of responsibility."

"He is not very serious, I think," Drimys suggested.

"I shouldn't think so either," General Buckworth agreed, swelling. "Why, the other day he invited me

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to act in some amateur theatricals he was getting up. Amateur theatricals in war-time! ”

“ A little exaggerated,” said Drimys, shaking his head.

“ And then we’re surprised that the Russians can’t make any headway against the Germans. Though, of course, they will,” the new Brigadier hurriedly added. “ They will, as I told the King this morning.”

“ His Majesty was a great deal pleased by your visit. I found him very content. ‘ That is a most sensible man,’ he has said to me.”

“ Well, of course, we are all soldiers, and we understand these things,” General Buckworth observed, with a grand aloofness from the mud of low-lying country. “ Politicians, *they* are the curse of modern life.”

“ Ah-ha,” Drimys sighed. “ We know that in our poor country better than anywhere.”

He turned to his Chief, who being unable to follow the English conversation, had been staring rigidly before him at the loathed atmosphere of the British Legation, and translated General Buckworth’s last remark. The Chief of Staff raised a hand, and spread wide five stubby fingers in the supreme gesture of contempt.

“ *La politique ?* ” he growled. “ *Bah !* ”

“ Ah, don’t I agree with you, General,” the Military Attaché puffed. “ Je dis que je suis beaucoup en accord avec vous.” Then he turned to Drimys with a majestic guffaw. “ And what about the German envoy from Berlin ? ”

Drimys touched him involuntarily to indicate the presence of Waterlow in the background.

“ Who *is* that over there ? ” General Buckworth asked, peering sternly in the direction of the palms.

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"It is Mr Waterlow, I think," Drimys murmured.

"Waterlow?" Buckworth repeated indignantly. "Good heavens, so it is! Well, don't let me keep you from the . . . er . . . music and gaiety above."

The Chief of the General Staff and Captain Paul Drimys passed on upstairs. General Buckworth advanced on Waterlow as Hunding on Siegmund, though the orchestra upstairs was playing Drdla's Serenade, which was hardly the incidental music for such a movement.

"I did not recognize you, Lieutenant-Commander Waterlow," he began ominously.

"Good evening, Colonel."

The new Brigadier bugled a preliminary cough.

"As a matter of fact I have just been promoted to be Brigadier-General."

"Congratulations, General. If I were a soldier I might have asked you to take me on as A.D.C."

"Who authorized you to wear that uniform?" the new Brigadier demanded, glowering.

"Are you doing the Naval Attaché's work while he is on leave?" Waterlow countered frigidly.

"I consider it an insult to the country whose guests we are that you should dare to put on the King's uniform to appear at a reception like this, at which the Prime Minister and most of the members of the Government are present."

"You're wearing *your* uniform," Waterlow snapped.

"I am not engaged upon organized espionage in a neutral capital."

"As Military Attaché you're doing a certain amount of disorganized espionage," Waterlow retorted.

"That is an accepted convention, I may remind you."

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"Well, it's nothing to do with you," said Waterlow shortly. "I've not seen Sir Frederic yet."

And at that moment the bulky form of the British Minister was seen coming down the stairs.

"Ah, Waterlow, good evening! Glad to see you here. Is Vane-Howard in the Chancery?"

"I believe he is, sir. Do you want him?"

"No, no," said Sir Frederic. "But you might tell him I'd like to see any telegrams as soon as he has decoded them. These wretched entertainments demoralize the whole of our routine."

General Buckworth lost no time in giving to his Minister what he called his candid opinion of Waterlow's presumption in putting on uniform.

"Why, surely one more or less among all you popinjays needn't make the feathers fly," said Sir Frederic with a laugh.

General Buckworth bowed the responsibility of the solecism on to the Minister's wide shoulders.

"You know best, sir. But I thought you ought to be told that several of my colleagues have remarked upon his appearance. They seemed to think it was a sign that you recognized his underground activities here as official."

Sir Frederic grunted.

"Oh! Umph! Well, that point of view hadn't struck me. Yes, well, perhaps you're right, Colonel. Umph! Yes, I'll speak to him."

"I'm very glad, sir. And—er—by the way I've just heard from the War Office that I have been promoted to be Brigadier-General."

"Ah, so the last of your urgent telegrams took effect," said Sir Frederic, turning away coldly toward the Chancery,

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where he found Waterlow handing the draft of a telegram to Vane-Howard.

"Anything important for me?" he asked.

"Nothing at all, sir," said the Second Secretary. "Two long communications about rice for the Commercial Attaché, that's all. And Waterlow wants me to send this to the Admiral."

He handed Sir Frederic the draft, which he read through frowning :

Following from W. It is hoped to telegraph position of enemy submarine within next twenty-four hours. Submit advantageous to warn Captain T that any information telegraphed from here will be really good.

"And I was going to add which patrol I thought the information was likely to affect most," said Waterlow.

"But why don't you telegraph this information in your own cypher?" Sir Frederic asked a little irritably. "I don't like to send this sort of stuff to the Admiral over my signature while Williamson is away."

"But, sir, your signature will be on the telegram whether it goes in my cypher or not. The only thing against my cypher is that it takes such a long time to decode my telegrams that they often get pushed on one side. And though this one isn't so urgent, suppose I did get really urgent information, I *would* want to get it off straight from the Legation. An hour might be vital."

Sir Frederic, hearing the eagerness in his voice, shook his head reproachfully; but to Vane-Howard he said:

"Very well; I suppose we must take part in this naval operation."

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"I'll get it off for you right away, Pirate," the Second Secretary drawled.

Sir Frederic took Waterlow out into the corridor.

"I would have sent off that telegram without putting you to the inconvenience of wearing naval uniform," he said.

"I ought not to have worn it, you mean, sir?"

"Well, it's a little embarrassing for me, isn't it?" Sir Frederic suggested kindly.

Waterlow was shocked. He had certainly not meant to embarrass the Minister.

"I have no need to tell you that I am not very much in sympathy with the present Government of this unhappy country," Sir Frederic went on. "And that being the case, it behoves me to be particularly careful to do nothing that might hurt their susceptibilities."

"I understand, sir."

"So it wouldn't do for them to be able to suggest that you had any official status here, Waterlow. You agree with me, I'm sure."

"I understand perfectly, sir," said Waterlow, who would have liked to kick himself for putting the man he so much admired under the necessity of rebuking him, was it done never so tenderly and tactfully.

"Oh, just change into ordinary evening clothes, and come along back. You haven't been upstairs yet, and the evening is still dreadfully young," Sir Frederic concluded with a groan.

"Well, if I don't find anything very urgent," Waterlow said.

"Come, come, an evening off will do you good, especially if you intend to capture a submarine single-handed to-morrow night," Sir Frederic chuckled.

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"I'm awfully sorry, sir, I should have made it necessary for you to put me right like this. It was thoughtless of me."

"Now please, my dear fellow, don't worry your head about that. Come, I hope to see you back presently."

Waterlow slipped quickly out of the Legation, hesitated a moment which way he should go, and then turned to the right up the street that led out on the main boulevard. He had no intention of going back to the party. It had been fun to look forward to when he was still on good terms with Georgie; but not so amusing now. What a dismal affair this evening had become. Much better to have stayed at home, or even have gone to the Tip Top. On a sudden impulse he looked back over his shoulder at the unhurrying people on the moonlit pavement. He fancied that he was being followed, and bending down to tie his shoe-lace he noticed that a man twenty yards back had paused to light a cigarette. A few yards further on Waterlow paused to light a cigarette himself, and the man he had marked with the straw hat paused at the same time to light another. Waterlow left the boulevard at the next turning and walked slowly up a quiet street. He looked back presently, and the man in the straw hat was still following him, but at a greater distance on account of the absence of traffic here. Waterlow rang the bell of the next house he reached, and asked the girl who opened the door for the first name that occurred to him. Then after apologizing for his mistake he came down the steps on to the pavement just as his shadow passed the house. Walking fast, he overtook him and recognized the new under-porter.

"Go back to the Legation and tell Captain Drimys

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that you don't know where I went," he growled. "Get along with you. Hurry!"

And as the cadaverous young man turned Waterlow helped him six feet on his way with a kick that made him yell with pain. Then he hurried on himself to Number Ten. It began to look as if there was something up this very night.

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So long as Queenie was being entertained by Stavro her nervous agitation was not excessive, betraying itself only when she looked at her sparkling wrist-watch and saw how fast the time was going. Then through her mind the vision of her broken mirror on the floor would recur with dread of the future it portended. The arrival of Crowder at last only increased her agitation.

"But you can tell me anything you wanted to tell Commander Waterlow. It's really the same thing," she was assured.

"Oh no, please, I cannot be telling you anything at all. It is only to Mr Waterlow that I must tell what I must tell," she insisted obstinately.

And no argument or suggestion of Crowder's could persuade her to yield on this point.

"But Commander Waterlow is at the British Legation," the second-in-command kept telling her. "If you wait here I'll go and fetch him if it's as urgent as you say. I'll take the risk."

"There is no more time now. I must go myself to the English Legation if I am to say what I must," she decided to Crowder's dismay.

He was in a quandary. He was even tempted to break a rule made in the early days of the Bureau, which was that on no account was he ever to telephone to his chief when he was at the Legation. Still, a rule was a rule.

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Sir Frederic once observed to Waterlow that the loss of its original meaning by the word "prove" had done as much damage as anything to English common sense. The exception proved the rule, the parrots would say, so that after it had been tried by the incredulous exception the rule always remained triumphantly unimpaired like the answer of a sum in simple arithmetic. The feet of clay were used to "prove" the omnipotence of the gilded idol. Crowder had a natural respect for rules, which had been developed by the discovery that nothing took the burden of responsibility from his own shoulders so easily and assuredly as a rule. After all, though this Queenie Walters might insist that Commander W had told her to come here and bring him certain information, how was he to know that she was speaking the truth? The more he thought about it, the more he felt inclined to rely upon that rule about telephoning. But ought he to let *her* go to the Legation? To be sure, there was no rule about that, but Commander W might not relish being called out from a reception to interview a girl in a big hat like that. If they were still here this time next year, perhaps he should be invited to the Legation reception himself, and of course he would be going in uniform, like Commander W. But this girl?

"No, really, you can't worry Commander W to-night. If you'll only leave the message with me, I can promise you that he. . . ."

"No, no, I will not. And now I must go."

"Yes, but, look here, are you going to the Legation?"

"That is for me to say, I think, not for you at all," Queenie haughtily proclaimed.

Whatever he did he was sure to be wrong, Crowder

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philosophized to himself. Bound to be wrong. Bound to be. Let her go to the Legation. Anyway, the Chief could settle whether he would see her or not. If he really did want to see her, well, he would, and not much harm would have been done. And if he didn't—well, she wouldn't be admitted. . . .

"If you please, I must go now, sir," Queenie interrupted.

Then the fat man had an inspiration. He would tell Stavro to follow her. If there was any hanky-panky . . . well, if there *was* any hanky-panky, where exactly did Stavro come in? Still, it would sound well. 'I didn't know whether you'd want to see the girl, Commander W, so I told Stavro to follow her. I thought if there was any hanky-panky. . . .'

And there was a good deal of hanky-panky, but not at all of the kind that Crowder expected, if, indeed, from the nebula of his mind any positive shape of hanky-panky had as yet evolved.

Queenie, followed by Stavro, had not been gone five minutes when the bell rang three times, and then twice.

"Back already," thought the fat man rather pleasantly surprised, for even after this short time alone with the pattern of the Tree of Life he was beginning to feel a little jumpy. The old housekeeper in the basement would not be of much help if the Turks should decide to take advantage of his isolation and kidnap him to-night. His forehead became moist. He had a vision of the bastinado. Ugh! And then an even more unpleasant vision of boiling eggs held under his armpits. Ugh!

"Is that you, Stavro?" he called out from the window. It was true he had arranged for him to ring three times

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and then twice like that. But being to all intents completely alone in the house it was as well to make sure.

"Open, please. Open, please, quickly," a boy's gasping voice was heard.

"Tootle-oo," answered Crowder who in moments of extreme nervousness was apt to indulge in such jocular acknowledgments of other people's requests.

The boy slammed the door behind him.

"What in Jerusalem is the matter?" he was asked in English.

"We must bolt the door, please."

He slipped the bolts top and bottom. Then he followed Crowder into the room.

"Now, what's the matter?" the fat man repeated in the boy's own language.

Stavro still out of breath explained that he had followed the fair young woman as he had been ordered, and that just round the corner two police agents had stopped her. She had screamed out that she must go on, but they had answered that on the contrary she must come with them to the police station. Then the fair young woman had called on him to help her, and he had helped her.

"What did you do?"

"I have spat first in the face of one and I have spat again in the face of the other."

Crowder laughed.

"And then they have both let go of the fair young woman, who has run away very fast, and they have come to seize me."

"And then I suppose you ran away?"

"No, no," the boy murmured, with a subtle Venetian smile.

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He put his hand inside his waistcoat and drew out the knife, which was smeared with red.

"You stabbed somebody?" Crowder gasped.

"I have put my knife first in the leg of one, and then into the leg of the other. It was very good," he sighed luxuriously. After which he proceeded to wipe the blade lovingly on the powder-blue and blood-red draperies.

"You—you—but do you mean to tell me that you've just stabbed two police agents?" Crowder gasped.

"Three."

"Three?"

"There is another who has wished to stop me when I was running away. So I have put my knife into him."

Crowder mopped the moisture on his forehead.

"Well, *we* shan't be able to keep you out of prison," he said indignantly. "Don't expect *us* to help you, you vicious little blighter."

"It is for me nothing to go to prison if my Capitaine is content with me."

"Content with you? You wait and see how content the Captain will be," Crowder threatened. And then helplessly he fell to mopping his forehead again while Stavro, having wiped his knife clean, went back into the passage and sat with his ear to the door, humming nonchalantly to himself a ballad about a brave islander who cut off the heads of three Turks and threw them into his mother's stock-pot.

Meanwhile, Queenie was flying through the moonlit streets and looking to right and left for an empty automobile for hire. The city clocks were striking ten. She

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was nearly distracted. She did not dare to stop anybody and ask where the British Legation was. She feared to find her arm held again and a dirty, dark, unshaven face peering into hers to tell her she must come along at once to the police station. At last she saw a disengaged car and jumped into it with breathless directions to drive through this broken looking-glass world of moonshine to the British Legation, just at the same moment as down in the Legation itself a few hundred yards away Captain Drimys, who much to Scrutton's indignation had sent out the new under-porter on Waterlow's heels to buy him some cigarettes, was meeting Georgie on the marble stairs.

"Ah, it is you, I am so glad," he exclaimed and pressed her hand in both of his.

"Really and truly glad?"

"Indeed yes, for I have been, I confess, a little jealous. I did not care to leave you with that fellow before dinner."

"You needn't be very jealous of *him*," she laughed lightly.

"I am just a little puzzled about Mr Waterlow."

"Yes, I'm a little puzzled about him," Georgie murmured in a remote voice, answering herself rather than him.

"I wonder why he has gone so quickly from the Legation?"

"Gone?" she echoed sharply. "Has he gone?"

"Yes, a moment ago he has gone."

"Oh, I expect he's off on one of his comic-opera performances," she snapped.

Drimys looked at his watch, then over his shoulder at the door, then at his watch again, gnawing his moustache.

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"Something seems to be worrying you, Paul."

He made a careless gesture.

"He and the brigands and ruffians he employs are always capable of creating unpleasantness for us. But let us go upstairs and find a charming nook where we can sit and talk of charming things."

"I don't feel very charming to-night," she said, looking at the door with a frown.

"You are perhaps annoyed because Mr Waterlow has forsaken you?"

"Paul, if you mention that man's name again you'll make me really angry. Why on earth should I care whether he's here or not?"

The A.D.C. had quite made up his mind since this afternoon to prosecute the intrigue with Georgie. Her interest in Waterlow while it stimulated rivalry was also reassuring because it seemed to guarantee him against any sentimental entanglement. It happened that to-night circumstances would make the combination of business and pleasure particularly easy.

"*Eh bien!* if you will come for a drive with me to-night in the moonlight," he told her, "I will not any more believe that you are so much interested in this spy."

"You take a great deal for granted, *cher ami*," Georgie sneered. "I really don't know why you suppose I should bother to convince you one way or the other."

"It is so plain how you are piqued by Mr Waterlow's behaviour, my dear little Georgie, that your sarcasm, which is only the sarcasm of a *femme méprisée*, does not affect me."

"How dare you say that? How dare you?" she challenged fiercely under her breath; and because by now they

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were among the crowded guests upstairs she could not stamp her foot, but had to break one of the ivory slats of her fan instead.

He shrugged his shoulders and maliciously took the opportunity to leave her in the company of the American Minister, who as usual began to hold forth on the superior moral atmosphere of Salamanca, Ohio, where before the Democratic victory plunged him into European diplomacy he owned and edited the *Salamanca Eagle and Courant*.

"These poor folks have no home-life, Mrs Radcliffe," he hawked gloomily. "Well, I took this post to oblige my friend President Wilson; but believe me, Mrs Radcliffe, I find the absence of our sweet and lovely home-life a most terrible deprivation."

"You'll have to come in on our side, Mr Notcutt," said Georgie, smiling up into his lean shining snuff-dark face. "And then the war will be over all the sooner, and you'll be able to be at home again."

"Why, that's what Mrs Notcutt says. But I tell her that there are many aspects of the situation to be considered." And he was off in the style of one of his own leading articles.

Georgie became so desperately bored that she even called out to her husband as he passed.

"I'll be back in a moment, Georgie. Sir Frederic wants something from the Chancery."

Whatever it was, Arthur kept his Minister waiting, for, as he reached the foot of the stairs, Scrutton opened the front door and in response to a voice poignantly familiar he heard the porter say:

"Captain Waterlow is not here, Miss."

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"Not here?" Queenie echoed in dismay. "But I am being told that he is surely here."

"He left hardly five minutes ago."

"But it is so necessary that I must see him. Where will he be now?"

"I'm sure I couldn't tell you, Miss," said Scrutton in a discouraging tone. "He might be anywhere."

"Oh dear, what must I do?" she lamented.

The new under-porter with a muttered excuse slipped in from outside past Queenie, and moved across to the cloakroom with a slight limp.

"I'm sorry, Miss; I'm afraid I can't help you," said Scrutton firmly; and he would have closed the door against her if Arthur had not interposed.

"I'll speak to this lady, Scrutton."

"Very good, sir."

The head porter's black eyebrows were arched as he held wide the door for this creature with the big plumed hat and frock of champagne crêpe-de-Chine and painted face to enter the austere hall of the Legation.

But the Third Secretary took the unsuitable visitor down the steps and closed the front door behind him.

"Tut, tut, there's an artful young bounder for you," Scrutton muttered to himself. If he could have heard the American Minister holding forth upstairs on the superiority of transatlantic home-life he might have endorsed his observations.

"Why do you want Waterlow?" Arthur demanded. "And what is that car for?"

To Arthur's jealous eye Queenie in this blazing moonlight appeared made up with unnatural excess.

"Why do you want Waterlow?" he repeated harshly.

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"Because I must see him to-night."

"What do you want to see him for?"

"I cannot tell to you why I must see him. But I must see him."

"Where are you going in that car?"

"I am going to the place where I must see Mr Waterlow."

"You're playing some game with me," he inveighed.

"No, no, my dearie, I am not playing any game. I am being so serious really. It is Mr Waterlow who has said not to tell anybody when I must see him."

Arthur became haggard.

"Oh, he said that, did he? And am I anybody?"

"*Ach*, he has said I must not be telling to you first of all people why I must see him."

"Did he tell you to meet him to-night?"

"No, no, no, no! You cannot be understanding, my dearie."

"And I thought you loved me," he groaned.

"Please tell to me where is Mr Waterlow. It will be so easy for you to know perhaps to-morrow why I must see him to-night. But he will never give to me my English passport unless I can do this thing for him."

"The swine! The swine!" Arthur cried. Then the moonrays pierced his brain. No matter that this was the pavement outside the British Legation. It burned white-hot with fever. It flickered with a nightmare fire.

"By G——, Queenie," he cried, choking. "You shall tell me where you are going to see this fellow to-night."

"But he does not know, he does not know," she wailed. Then she looked down in affright at the glittering watch

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on her wrist. The fragile tenuous hands seemed to be flying fast as arrows through the moonlight. "Oh, I must go quickly, quickly!" she cried.

"Well, *I* will tell him where you are going," said Arthur becoming abruptly calm. It was as if his brain were an immense cavern whose farthest recesses had been illuminated by this moon. Within his mind all was clear. He knew now exactly what he should do.

"But he said I must not tell the place to you," Queenie moaned.

"Darling, tell me! Tell me. Darling, darling!"

She was not proof against this pleading voice with its echoes of past happiness.

"It was to be a restaurant by the sea. I do not know what it is called. Perhaps I have said what I must not say. Perhaps now he will never give to me the passport."

She had backed away from Arthur and had one foot on the step of the car.

"Where are you going now?" he demanded.

"I am now going to the theatre."

He was so tall and handsome standing there in the moonlight, and in the surging thought of what lay before her to-night she blew him a kiss. Then she scrambled into the car; and as it shot forward she knelt on the seat and called back to him tender names over the wrinkled hood, and blew him more kisses until the car swept round into the boulevard out of sight.

"Mr Radcliffe, you're wanted, sir, on the telephone," Scrutton called to him from his room when he came into the Legation. The porter was standing with his hand over the receiver.

"Captain Waterlow, sir, enquiring after the young

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person who was here a minute ago. Will you speak to him? ”

Arthur took the receiver, and with Scrutton as an audience he managed to achieve his best Foreign Office manner.

“ Oh, hul-lo, Pirate, is that you? ”

“ Where’s Queenie? ” crackled the agitated voice of Waterlow on the mica.

“ She’s just gone.”

“ Where? ”

“ To the theatre. She was in a car.”

“ Did she give you any message for me? ”

“ Only that she was going to the theatre.”

“ Did she say why she wanted me so urgently? ”

“ Apparently it was something to do with this passport.”

Arthur wondered if the hatred he felt was communicating itself.

“ Why on earth didn’t you keep her till I could come back? ”

“ My dear fellow, she was in such a deuce of a hurry. I understood she had an appointment with you.”

The telephone rang off abruptly at the other end.

Arthur’s first impulse was to leave the Legation at once, get into his own car, drive to the Tip Top, and intervene immediately between Waterlow and his treachery. But after thinking it over, though to dignify with the name of thought the confused incitements of the jealousy that so madly possessed him is absurd, he decided to wait and catch them out at this restaurant by the sea. There was only one restaurant by the sea where moon-struck people went to carry on affairs like this. That was

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at Miramara, and so to Miramara he himself would drive to-night. What excuse should he make to Georgie? It would be rather amusing to tell her he was going out with Waterlow. That cad! That cad! Why had he ever given him his confidence? He might have known a fellow like that would have no scruples in taking advantage of it. What was it Sir Frederic had been asking for just now? Oh, yes, those photographs of the Western Front. He found them and was taking them upstairs when he heard the voice of Captain Drimys in the hall, enquiring if the under-porter had brought him back his cigarettes yet. Georgie was still in the toils of the American Minister, and was so glad to be rescued that she was almost pleasant to her husband, who told her that Waterlow had invited him to go out with him later on to-night.

"With some pretty ladies?" she asked.

He laughed this off. There were other things in life besides pretty ladies, he assured her. No, this was some stunt of Waterlow's. He knew more or less what it was, but he ought not to say.

"Well, as a matter of fact," Georgie announced, "Captain Drimys has invited *me* to go for a drive with him to-night. So your arrangement fits in beautifully with mine. I shall enjoy getting cool after the party."

Arthur frowned. It was not that he cared in the least where Georgie went or what she did when she arrived; but this was a little too shameless. He did not want to be laughed at. The small world of this small capital was too much with them to-night, he thought, looking round at the prismatic throng chattering away above the music of Dvorak's Humoresque.

"And here is Captain Drimys himself," Georgie said.

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"Captain Drimys, I was just telling my husband that you have invited me to go for a moonlight drive after the party. And since he is going for a drive with Commander Waterlow, I have much pleasure in accepting your kind invitation." She dropped him a curtsy, and he responding to it with a low bow caught the fire of her wanton blue eyes and felt his throat thicken.

Arthur stood by, scowling at this pantomime of mock ceremony. It would have been all the same if Waterlow really had invited him. She had no discretion. But he lacked the strength of mind to forbid Georgie her drive. He allowed Drimys to suggest calling for her at the Hotel du Monde at midnight, on the plea that he should enjoy the moonlit air better if, with her permission, he could get rid of his uniform first.

"Well, I hope you'll have a good drive. I don't know yet what time Waterlow wants me," Arthur said feebly.

"So, are you driving with Mr Waterlow?" Drimys commented with a smile. "I would be so glad to know where he is going for a drive to-night?"

Drimys had some reason to be amused. He had just heard from his agent downstairs of the arrival of Queenie, of her asking for Waterlow, and of Arthur Radcliffe's hurrying out to speak to her. He wondered how many men had been unfortunate enough to be given two pairs of horns in one night. To be duped by a wife and a mistress under the same moon was surely *archicomique*. Things were going well for Captain Drimys to-night. Just now they had rung him up from the headquarters of the police to say that in the execution of their duty some of their men had been stabbed by English agents

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who had taken refuge at the notorious Number Ten. That would give an excellent opportunity to interfere with the nocturnal movements of the Bureau. The visitor in whom Captain Drimys was interested had left for his destination at ten o'clock; the road would now be closed to all traffic without the password until dawn by a detachment of twelve police under a sergeant which had left at six o'clock to take up their position.

And yet neither the police nor Captain Drimys knew everything. They did not know that the visitor in whom they were both interested had stopped outside the Tip Top Theatre on his way to Miramara, nor that he had waited there for ten impatient minutes to be rewarded at last by the sight of a slim young woman with pale gold hair wearing a frock of champagne crêpe-de-Chine and a large black picture hat with ostrich plumes. They did not know that the agent called Milton had just telephoned to Number Ten the news of Queenie's departure from the Tip Top with the German officer in a large Daimler car, nor that the chief of the detested English Bureau was at this moment shaking a very pale and plump second-in-command, and calling him all the kinds of fool he could put his tongue to.

"No, please, C-C-Commander Waterlow. I c-c-can't explain if you k-k-keep on shaking me," the wretched Crowder was protesting.

"Explain, you blasted idiot? What can ever explain your damn fool behaviour," cried Waterlow, flinging Crowder from him to the other end of the little draped room, where he clutched at the pattern of the Tree of Life.

"You don't give me a chance," he half blubbered.

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"She comes here, perhaps with news of the very place he's going to meet the submarine, and you haven't the guts to telephone to me to come back. But you let her go! Let her go without any precautions of any kind! Let her go without saying a word! Oh, my God, the sooner you're back in the licorice trade, the better for everything else in this unhappy world except licorice."

"It's no good getting ratty with me, Commander Waterlow. You told me I was never to telephone you at the Legation under any circumstances. You made that a rule."

Waterlow waved his arms in an ecstasy of rage.

"A rule! A rule! You infernal duffer, how many times have I told you that rules are made to be broken? Why didn't you come and fetch me and keep the girl here till we got back? You did the one thing you ought not to have done."

"Now listen, Commander Waterlow; be fair, please. She came here at half-past eight, just after I'd gone out to dinner."

"Dinner! Dinner!" Waterlow raved. "Do you ever think about anything else except your fat belly?"

"Well, a man's got to eat some time. You were having your dinner at the Hotel du Monde."

"Go on," Waterlow snarled. "How long did you spend guzzling?"

"Not very long," the second-in-command replied in the voice of a wronged hero. "I went up to Number Fifteen after dinner to see if there was any message or anything from Keats, and I waited there till nearly ten on the chance of his coming, and then as he didn't turn up I came on here. I found this girl here with Stavro. Nobody

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else in the place. She was all in a shake. I did my best to get her to tell me what she wanted. But she wouldn't listen, and she wouldn't wait. When she heard you were at the Legation, she said she was going there, and that if she didn't go at once it would be too late. I didn't know *what* to do. I was at my wits' end. However, I did think of sending Stavro to follow behind her. I did think of that, Commander W. You see, I thought there might be some hanky-panky, and I thought, by gum, if there's any hanky-panky I'll. . . ."

"That's enough of you and your thoughts," Waterlow shouted. "And a nice mess Stavro made of it. There's nothing will serve their book better here than to get our people to attack them like that. You couldn't have done a more idiotic thing than send that boy with her."

"Now be just, please, Commander W. It wasn't my fault Stavro used his knife."

"Sending a boy like that!"

"There was nobody else to send I tell you. Everybody else was out. Dryden, Milton, Shelley. . . ."

"Idiots! All idiots!" Waterlow stormed. "The biggest coup we ever had the chance to make, and you all conspire to wreck it! And I'm the biggest idiot of the lot for putting on this blasted uniform. If I hadn't done that, I'd still have been at the Legation when she came. And even when I left if I hadn't had this uniform on I'd probably have gone up to the Tip Top myself."

Waterlow threw down his cap and stamped upon it. Then he took off his jacket and pointed to the wavy gold lace on the sleeve.

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"You damned well shan't have a commission," he vowed. "I'll take good care of that. You coax a dog to lift its leg against the sleeve of the coat you're wearing! That's all the wobbly gold lace you'll ever get."

"Oh, Commander W, please!" the miserable Crowder groaned.

"No, by gad, you shan't have a commission. I won't have you dressing yourself up, Crowder. I've had my lesson, and I'll telegraph to-morrow to say that Mr Crowder had better remain Mr Crowder, and that one broken-down idiot of a Lieutenant-Commander is ornament enough for this cursed job."

"Perhaps after all if we had collared the bag, there wouldn't have been anything in it," Crowder suggested soothingly.

"And perhaps if we'd collared the submarine, we should have found that empty too," Waterlow jeered. "Always able to console yourself, aren't you, Crowder?"

He prodded the fat man contemptuously.

"Blah! Blah! Lather, nothing but lather! Well, come on," he growled, "give me some paper. I'll get on with my clerical work, blast you all again!"

Waterlow sat down at his table to begin the private letter he sent every week to his chief in London.

"That nib's all right, I think," said the wretched Crowder, placing a pen on the table in front of him.

"I wish to God Stavro had stuck a knife into your fat carcase," was all the thanks he got. "Why, Milton wouldn't have made such a besotted ass of himself as you have to-night. Give me another pen. This nib's as thick as your head."

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Then he began to write:

Dear Captain X, First of all, thanks very much for managing the commission for Crowder. He has worked like a slave ever since he has been with me, and I'm more than grateful to you for giving me the chance to show my appreciation of his services. I'm a little disappointed that he couldn't have been made a Lieutenant, but I know how sticky the Admiralty are getting, and both he and I would have preferred to get this Assistant Paymastership rather than a 2nd Lieutenant, G.P.O. from the War Office. Or is it 2nd Lieutenant, General Service?

I'm afraid I was a little optimistic in my postscript yesterday about the capture of the German mail, and the chance of bagging a submarine. Moreover, I've only myself to blame for the failure by not taking sufficiently into consideration the possibility of the envoy leaving earlier than my information had led me to suppose he would. An awkward thing has just happened. One of our people got involved in a row with some of the local police and used his knife on them. I'm waiting now a little anxiously to know what happens. I'm very much afraid that I shall have to hand our fellow over to the local police without being able to do much for him. I dislike the idea of disowning him, but the Legation can hardly intervene on his behalf. I can't really blame the boy for what he did, and it seems rotten to hand over a kid of fourteen to be mauled about in one of their filthy prisons, so I shall certainly have a shot at getting him over to one of the islands out of harm's way. But it may be difficult. A good deal of pressure is being brought on Sir Frederic Ovenden to disown us all, and I shouldn't

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be surprised if the Foreign Office takes up the matter of my work out here. The new Permanent Under-Secretary is by no means a friend of Sir Frederic and, as you know, very much on the look-out against anything being done that savours at all of anti-monarchical bias. That's really our main trouble with the French. They are firmly convinced that we are pledged to keep every tinpot king in Europe safe on his throne, and you know how much they enjoy unseating kings. They make absolutely no secret of their determination to have a republic declared here. And they are so indiscreet about it. Only this evening the French Naval Attaché was shouting out in the hall of the British Legation about "ce roi traître," and how they must "chasser" him from his "royaume." It would help a great deal if you could give me in confidence some line about the military point of view. It doesn't seem worth while to upset this wretched country unless its intervention is really vital to us. A distinguished member of the General Staff at Salonica expressed the opinion in my hearing last week that "if these blighters do come in on our side they'll be a damned sight more trouble than they are now." If all our bullying only means. . . .

The writer put down his pen to listen.

"Hark, what's that?"

Crowder ran to the window.

"Somebody running down the street."

"Go and open the door quickly," Waterlow ordered.

"It may be one of our chaps."

Crowder, a little pale, moved toward the door, and Waterlow after locking away his unfinished letter in the

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safe stood by the window. To the sound of running footsteps were added hoarse confused cries farther down the street.

"I am ready, my Capitaine," Stavro murmured at his elbow, his wooden face made marvellously alive by that subtle cinquecento smile.

"You go back at once to where I sent you, you little ruffian," said Waterlow. "You've done enough mischief for one night."

Stavro retired to the agent's big club-room at the back of the house, where he tested the sharpness of his knife on the playing-cards scattered about the floor, spiking every heart in turn.

A moment later Crowder marched in, followed by Milton and a bright-eyed little wop called Yanni, who spoke fluently the language of wops.

"Coo!" the fat man ejaculated proudly. "They're round us like wasps to-night, Commander W."

"All hell let loose to-night, Skipper!" declared Milton, with one of his tremendous gestures.

"You melodramatic oaf, what do you mean?" his chief demanded severely.

"They're all round us, Skipper. That's what I mean. There's a police patrol each corner of the street. Yanni and me had to run like hares to get through them."

"There were no police when I came along twenty minutes ago," said Waterlow.

"They're thick as flies now, Skipper. God's truth, they are. There's been nothing like it since La Bassée. But I outed with these and put my back to the railings and. . . ."

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"Don't flourish those damned pistols in here," Waterlow interrupted savagely. "Put them away at once."

Milton reluctantly crammed the weapons back into his hip pockets and took up Crowder's pipe from the table to illustrate his tale.

"I got my back to the railings, Skipper, and I held 'em at bay till Yanni here come round the corner, and then I covered us both as far as the house. Didn't I, boy?"

The bright-eyed wop nodded vigorously.

"Oh yes, sare," he affirmed. "Mr Milton run fine. Oh, he run grand."

"Well, seeing I was running backwards and covering 'em with these," Milton said, tapping his behind proudly, "I don't think I did run too bad."

Crowder gurgled with laughter.

"Go on, Milton, you swanker! Why, when I went to open the door you were all doubled up like an old woman with rheumatism."

Milton frowned gravely.

"Steady now, Mr Crowder. This isn't a comic joke. Yanni, didn't I cover you? Speak the truth now, boy."

"Yes, Mr Milton, you was foist. I can't run quick like you can since I was knocked down by that trolly-car in Noo Yoik."

Waterlow intervened in the argument about valour.

"Have you come straight from the Tip Top, Milton?"

"That's right, Skipper. I come away the moment I done telephoning you about Queenie and von Dangel. I wondered whether you'd like me to shoot 'em both in the road, but then I thought I'd better telephone you instead. Big grey car. Queenie Walters drove up in

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another car and jumped out on the pavement. Von Dangel shouted out something in German, and she got in with him right away, took her hat off and threw it down in the car, and then they were off like the wind."

"Which direction?"

"Right on past the Tip Top."

"North, eh? Was there any luggage in the car?"

"I couldn't see, Skipper. I thought if I got too close to him when he was waiting there for Queenie Walters (suspect) he might get frightened and drive off without her."

"Did you know he was waiting for Queenie?"

"Of course I didn't know he was waiting for her. I only knew he must be waiting for somebody, and as I thought you'd want to know who it was I wasn't going to frighten him away."

"How was von Rangel dressed?"

"Major Ernst von Dangel (suspect)?"

"The German officer. His name doesn't matter."

"In the suit he bought when he arrived for sixty francs at. . . ."

"You're sure?"

Milton crossed himself."

"Certain, Skipper."

"Then perhaps this is only a joy-ride?" Waterlow suggested hopefully.

Milton shrugged his shoulders to disown theorizing.

"My business is to report what I see," he proclaimed with unctuous solemnity, "Milton doesn't report 'perhapes.' Only 'wases' and 'ises.' That's why I'm the best man you've got, Skipper. As soon as I see Queenie drive off with von Dangel, I said to myself, 'Milton, the

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Skipper'll want to know this.' Eight secret police followed me out of the Tip Top. But I dodged 'em. That's nothing to me. While they were looking for me in the public urinal I was on the telephone giving you my news. That's Milton. And here I am. And here's my report."

He placed on the table one of those familiar pieces of paper on which in his bold legible hand was written:

Queenie Walters (suspect) see my other reports, arrived at the Tip Top Theatre at 10.23 p.m. She left at 10.24 p.m. accompanied by Major von Dangel (suspect) see my other reports.

"Very well, that'll do," said Waterlow. "You'd better go and wait in the back room in case you're wanted."

"Right, Skipper." He paused in the doorway and pronounced solemnly: "Mr Crowder, if you hadn't opened the door just when you did, I don't believe I could have held my hand much longer. There'd have been a few dead police on the doorstep of Number Ten in another minute."

He retired, shaking his head over the averted tragedy.

Milton was hardly out of the room before they heard the clatter of a horse and carriage being driven very fast and challenging shouts in its wake. Waterlow told Yanni to get to the door and have it ready open.

"This is something like a night," Crowder declared, rubbing his hands with the gusto of a D'Artagnan. With Waterlow by his side he could cock a snook at danger.

The carriage stopped outside Number Ten. The door slammed behind somebody's hasty entrance. Yanni came

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n to announce that there was a guy in the passage with a handkerchief round his face who said he wanted to see the Captain.

"Keats?" Waterlow asked eagerly.

Crowder strode across the room with firm business-like tread to admit the surreptitious mousy-haired little man.

"Lock the door," said Waterlow. "I don't want Milton to see him, if possible. You've taken a nice risk, Keats, to come to this house. I hope you've brought some information that will justify you."

"I have risked my life, Capitaine," said the agent. "But I have big informations, and when you hear them you will be paying me two thousand francs a month, I think."

"I'm afraid you won't be worth two francs a month after compromising yourself like this," Waterlow announced.

"Why didn't you go to Number Fifteen at nine o'clock?" Crowder put in sternly.

The little man withered Crowder with a glance.

"Please do not interrupt me, Mr Crowder," he said, "and I tell you why." He turned eagerly to Waterlow. "Listen to me, please, Capitaine, for what I tell you now is more important than all things I tell. At a quarter to nine a clocks, when I am going to leave the Legation and be at Number Fifteen at nine a clocks." He paused to wither Crowder with a second glance. "When I am going to leave at a quarter to nine, I say, von Waldstein comes from his room and calls to me in the hall, 'Hi!' And for a moment I am turning pale with frights and my heart is knocking against my ribs

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because I think he has found out somethings about what I am doing against him. But no, he has found nothing. 'You wait here,' he says, 'till half-past of nine for take message if I am wanting you.' And I wait. And at nearly ten a clocks there comes with a big grey-colour automobile this German officer von Rangel, and he goes to see von Waldstein. And von Waldstein calls to me again. 'Hi! There is no messages. You can leave the Legation for go home!' And I open the door and I look at this big grey-colour automobile, and I see inside of him a valise, and I think to myself how it is sure that he goes away to-night and not to-morrow or to-morrow after as they have said at first. And I stand there on the steps of the Legation, and I am nearly dying with what I must do. But I would die, Capitaine, because I know that you will be a son to my mother and pay to her moneys so that she can buy a land for grow tobaccos. So I take my heart in my hand and I go quickly into von Waldstein's room and before he looks at me yellow with rage and shouts me to go out from the room I hear these words in German : 'You can have very good *soldaten* in this hotel both on the sea and on the land because the only road is closed when you have passed.' And I think that he makes a *jeu de mots* when he speaks so. I think he means that there will be *langoustes* to eat and soldiers to watch that nobody takes him. And I think I know which is this hotel with *langoustes* and only one road."

He paused to fix his light blue eyes on Waterlow with an eager mantic stare.

"Miramara," Waterlow said quietly.

"I think you have said it right, Capitaine," he agreed with the complacent pride of a medium who has given

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his client a good evening. Then he resumed more practically. "So I hurry from the Legation, and it is now already late and I think 'if I take a carriage will I be allowed the price in my expenses?' because," with another withering glance in Crowder's direction, "Mr Crowder must always discute with me for my expenses. But I take the carriage, and I drive to Number Fifteen, and when I knock Madame Maria tells to me that Mr Crowder has gone away, and I must take now another carriage. And the first carriage cost me ten francs, please, Mr Crowder; and the second I have not paid, because I think you will pay I have told to the driver. So the man waits. And there are polices who have tried to stop him at the corner. So, he must be paid more, I think."

Waterlow picked up a telegram he had been scribbling during the last part of Keats's narration, and read it out :

"Very urgent. Following from W. My telegram number — this evening. Submarine may be expected at dawn in bay of Miramara."

"Take that round to the Legation at once, Crowder. Ask to see Sir Frederic and explain that it's for the Vice-Admiral and supplements the one I sent an hour ago. Ask him to let somebody encypher it at once. A clear-the-line telegram, you understand. If only it arrives before the old boy's asleep. Wait. I'll add, *This information absolutely reliable*. There's just a chance he may have a t.b.d., or anyway a trawler in the neighbourhood, and there's just a chance he may get a signal to them in time. Not much chance, but just a faint one. Get along now, Crowder."

The fat man hesitated.

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"What about the police at the corner, Commander W?"

"The police, idiot? What can the police do to you?"

"You don't think they'll fire at me, Commander W?" he quavered.

"Go on, and get into Keats's carriage and tell the man to drive hard. Get along with you, man. What the deuce are you waiting for?"

"What shall I do when they've encyphered the telegram?"

"Take it to the Eastern Telegraph Office yourself and see that it goes at once. Then join me at the Other House. No, that's no good. They've got all their spies round there. They may try to hold you up. Join me at the Fig Tree. I'll wait there till midnight. I shall have to collect a couple of fellows with guts. We may have a fight on the road. Anyway, get off with that telegram. If Sir Frederic objects to anything, point out that it's purely naval intelligence. Don't say I'm going to Miramara. Say you don't know anything about von Rangel. Now hurry and get along to the Legation."

Crowder tried to look bold as he set out, but it was not very successful.

"And you will pay the driver also as from Number Fifteen to here, Mr Crowder, and a little more because the polices have been shouting at him," Keats ran after him to say.

Waterlow pushed Keats into an inner toom after Crowder's dejected exit. Not that he had much hope of keeping any longer the secret of the little man's identity. However, he had had a long run, and if only things went well to-night his utility would expire with dolphin hues.

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And if the German Legation no longer required his services, no doubt he could be serviceably employed among the islands. He went over to the window. The carriage was still outside. Why on earth didn't Crowder get off?

A thunderous knocking on the front door was the answer, and Milton, his face as damp and pale as a cod's-head, came into the room.

"It's the police, Skipper," he said in a shaky voice. "I kept them off of us as long as I could. But they were too many for me. They've got poor old Crowder—Mr Crowder, I mean. Hadn't I better go and keep 'em away from the back of the house?"

He did not wait to be told; but lurched heavily toward the cover of the housekeeper's darkest cupboard in the basement.

"The last man the Skipper wants to lose is Milton," he assured the old lady. "Cover me up well, and if they ask what it is, say it's the washing."

He was hardly out of the room before a police-officer and two men appeared.

"It wasn't my fault, Commander W," Crowder bibbled. "I wouldn't open the door for them. I said, 'No.' It was Milton who opened the door and then ran like a mouse."

Waterlow had never been nearer to letting himself go in the language of the country; but he managed to restrain himself, and told Crowder to ask the officer what he meant by breaking into his house like this. There was a rapid exchange of gesticulation and volubility between Crowder and the lieutenant of police, at the end of which it was explained that the officer apologized deeply for the inconvenience he was causing, but that his

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orders were to allow nobody to leave this house until he had arrested the men who had taken shelter here after a ferocious attack on three police stationed at the corner of the street, to protect this very house.

"Tell him that officers attached to the British Legation are not in the habit of sheltering men who attack the police in the execution of their duty."

More gesticulation. More volubility.

"He says he's very sorry, sir, but what can he do?" Crowder translated.

By this time Waterlow was once more dressed as a naval officer, and as he straightened the white cover of his cap he told Crowder to ask this lieutenant of police if he was prepared to arrest a British officer.

The effect of the uniform was unmistakable. The lieutenant of police evidently did not like the notion at all.

"Ask him if he realizes that any violence shown to a British naval officer in uniform would be an act of open war," Waterlow said.

The lieutenant of police was a young man. The idea of plunging his country into war with Great Britain was not attractive.

"Tell him," Waterlow continued, "that I am now going to the British Legation, where I shall complain to the Prime Minister of the way my house has been broken into. If this officer will accompany me, he will be able to tell his own story and perhaps justify his extraordinary behaviour."

The young lieutenant had not the least desire to tell his own story to the Prime Minister. Indeed, in the whole of his not very long life he was unable to recall,

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since one or two bad moments at school, any prospect more repulsive. He begged Crowder with many apologies to be allowed to telephone and ask his headquarters for instructions.

"Not at all," Waterlow said. "He has only to accompany me to the Legation and he will be able to get all the instructions he wants. The Prime Minister is there, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of the Exterior, and several members of the General Staff."

Of course it ended as such arguments usually have ended since Cicero first let the world know that the statement '*civis Romanus sum*' was a protection against the insolence of weaker nations. The young lieutenant of police retired with his men. The way was clear.

"Though we've wasted a lot of priceless time," Waterlow growled as he pushed Crowder into the carriage.

Leaving Yanni in charge of Number Ten, with instructions to let Keats out when all was quiet, he sent Milton to collect three of his fellows and wait with them at the Fig Tree, his name for a small café on the outskirts of the city, the owner of which was in his confidence.

Crowder would find their own car at the Legation, and was to drive straight to the Fig Tree as soon as he had sent off the telegram to the Vice-Admiral. He telephoned round to a friendly garage to send along the big Lancia with the trusty chauffeur he had once or twice employed on secret missions. It was at the door by the time he had changed out of his uniform into one of his grey flannel suits. In this car he drove down to the harbour with Stavro. Here he waited while the boy slipped round to the Barrack for two more men.

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The Barrack was a stucco house in a large walled garden full of sun-withered grass on the cliff behind the harbour. Nominally it was a shelter for refugees from Turkey, administered by a couple of bright, efficient Englishwomen who provided food and shelter for the starving wretches that the tides of war had washed up on these shores. This charitable organization had been used as a convenient centre for the export of agents to Turkey before the Dardanelles attack ; but since then it had confined itself entirely to the purpose for which it was instituted. Neither Waterlow himself nor any of his known agents ever went near it. Communication with the two women in charge was entrusted when necessary to intermediaries. Camped out in the garden, which was reached by a rough cliff-path at the back, there were always half a dozen stalwarts who could be called on by Waterlow in case of emergency. These men were Anatolians of the same calibre as Nikko. The Turk was their enemy. Anybody or anything that stood between them and their vengeance was equally their enemy.

Stavro's face was as wooden as the gate in the high wall against which he leaned to whistle the tune of a song about the beauty and fascination of Smyrna. Yet his heart was in a flutter of pride, for presently he would be telling those giant brothers, Spiro and Vassili, about his stabbing of the policemen an hour ago. An old woman called in a hoarse voice through the grille to know what he wanted.

"Say," he told her in their own language, "say to big Spiro and to big Vassili his brother that there is much mastika to drink to-night, and to come quickly."

Two minutes later the gate opened and two men of

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great size, with baggy-seated breeches, strode out into the moonlight and followed Stavro to the waiting car. With him they got in behind. The hood was up. Waterlow sat in front with the chauffeur. Ten minutes afterwards they were at the Fig Tree, where Crowder had just arrived. A quarter of an hour later Milton and his three men joined them, and Waterlow explained the plan of operations.

"The distance from here to Miramara is seventeen miles. Our information is that the road was to be closed to all traffic after the German passed, which would have been somewhere about eleven o'clock. The road to Miramara does not branch off from the main road for five miles. Therefore, we may presume that nothing will be interfered with during the first five miles. Now listen carefully, Crowder, and you too, Milton, to my orders. Should there be soldiers or police stopping the traffic at the point where the Miramara road branches off you must get your car to the side of the road and put up some kind of a show of resistance. The only chance for us in the other car will be to drive on past you at full speed. Do you understand?"

"You mean we shoot to kill, Skipper?" asked Milton, his eyebrows meeting in a ferocious scowl.

"Shoot to kill, you silly donkey? Certainly not. You won't shoot at all."

"I understand you, Commander W," said Crowder eagerly. "We only pretend to resist. We don't really resist."

"Precisely."

Crowder sighed his relief.

"But I don't anticipate that you will be stopped where

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the road branches. My own idea is that you'll be stopped where the road curves round a sunken copse about six miles this side of Miramara. Now then, listen carefully, Crowder. You and Milton with Milton's three men will go first in one car. We shall want to drive fast, and the dust will make it impossible for us to be nearer than a quarter of a mile behind you. As soon as you are challenged pull up dead and blaze away into the air with your pistols."

"But suppose they think we're firing at them, Commander W," Crowder suggested. "They might fire back at us."

"Risky, Skipper. Very risky," said Milton gravely. "Not that I mind being sent to my death. I faced death at La Bassée. I'll face it again. But I don't think Mr Crowder wants to be shot like a rat in a trap. I'm speaking for him, Skipper. You understand me? Death's nothing to me. I'm used to it. But Mr Crowder . . ." he broke off, with a gesture of infinite pessimism.

"I've changed my mind," Waterlow announced abruptly. "I'm going to bank on their holding us up at the copse. You'll go first, Milton, with one of your men in our car, and the rest of us must pack into the Lancia somehow. You'll fire as soon as they stop you, Milton. We shall stop the other car and send it on with Crowder and your other two men. Spiro, Vassili, Stavro, and I will have to slip out, and we shall have to get across country somehow to Miramara. If they hold us up earlier, well, we must just make a try to rush them. But I don't want to do that. I want them to arrest both cars, and from what I know of these chaps they'll all try to get a joy-ride back in them to town. Argue with them as much as you like,

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Crowder, but finally under protest insist either on continuing your journey or being driven back to the headquarters of the police. The great point is to get the soldiers or police, or whatever they are, as far in the other direction from Miramara as possible, because we shall want to get back into the road as soon as we can. We're cutting it pretty fine as it is. We won't load up the Lancia till two miles this side of the copse. If they hold us up before, I'm going to rush them. It's half-past twelve already. We shall be at the copse soon after one, and with luck I'll be at Miramara by half-past two. Well, if I'm late it can't be helped."

Doubt began to take possession of Waterlow as the cars whirled along the main road in the dusty moonlight. He decided that for all the chance they had of getting the German bag or the submarine they might as well have stayed at home. Still, if they were held up on the public road it would give the local authorities something to explain away. Or was the whole thing moonshine? Had the excitement of his spying turned Keats's brain? Was it not almost certainly a delusion about this submarine? Was not the German envoy merely taking Queenie for a joy-ride? Was he not probably returning as usual by the north-west frontier meeting with the mail the first Austrian outpost and getting an escort as far as Belgrade? These doubts were infernal . . . unbearable . . . whirring, whirring on in a fog of white dust through this crystalline night, and to what end? Ah, there was the first car turning round into the narrow Miramara road. No sign of being held up yet. Three miles farther on the first car stopped, and when Waterlow looked at his companions he was reminded of the murderous Miller and his

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Men in that old melodrama he had acted so often in the toy-theatre of his childhood.

They stood there listening in a moon-drenched silence so absolute that they seemed to hear the white dust the cars had stirred up falling back upon the rocky scrub of the undulating country to right and left of the road.

Milton came up to Waterlow.

"Skipper," he whispered in hoarse emotion as he clutched his hand. "In case this is good-bye. I'll do my best, Skipper. But if they get me, you'll know that Milton died game. God bless you, Skipper."

He pulled out a musky handkerchief and smeared with tears the dust on his cheeks, as with shaking head and heaving shoulders he pounded manfully on toward the first car. The Lancia was so full now that, though the metal of the road was much broken up they bumped less than before. Waterlow was wedged between Spiro and Vassili on the back seat. Crowder was sitting beside the chauffeur. The first car turned round the bend by the copse. The Lancia drew up. Suddenly there were challenging shouts ahead; but no sound of a shot.

"Out we get," Waterlow whispered. Spiro, Vassili, Stavro and he jumped from the Lancia and flung themselves down among the aromatic scrub of the hillside. The car drove on. There were more challenging shouts; and after about five minutes of excited babble both cars came backing slowly along the road with half a dozen stunted figures in uniform clinging to each of them like so many monkeys. It had fallen out as Waterlow had hoped. The hard-walked police did not intend to lose the chance of a ride back to the city. The jabbering grew gradually fainter. Then they heard the grinding of the gears as

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the two cars struggled to turn in the narrow road, and presently a steady diminishing whirr in the direction whence they had come.

"Creep ahead, Stavro, and see if there are any of them left," Waterlow whispered.

In a minute or two he came running back along the road.

"Nobody, my Capitaine," he called.

"And now we must step out," said Waterlow, as a yard ahead of the giant brothers, but never clear of their huge shadows, with Stavro skipping beside him like a goat and the moon at his back, he hurried toward the bay of Miramara.

DAWN

IN days of peace, when petrol was not so hard to obtain, the bay of Miramara was a favourite resort for parties of pleasure from the capital, and there were few summer evenings when the terraces and balconies of the restaurant did not echo with a clatter of plates and happy excited voices. The bathing from the deep shelving beach of grey shingle was as perfect as any bathing can be without a stretch of level sand, because a low island about a mile long, the haunt of numerous rabbits and goats, stretched across the entrance to the bay and acted as a protection against the northerly wind which at any time through the *Ægean* summer is liable to disturb the dark blue sea more than is comfortable. Even better than the bathing were the crayfish, on the cooking of which in a variety of ways the proprietor of the inn had established an international reputation. As a final attraction, on one of the steep headlands that bounded the crescent beach on either side were the ruins of a temple dedicated, some said to Poseidon, others to Aphrodite. There were only left a few Doric columns still sustaining a few blocks of the architrave, but enough to hallow with an added beauty this time-hallowed land. The place was reputed loveliest beneath the moon or when dawn stained the marble with living rose ; but it was lovelier and shed a rarer influence on the mind in the midday loneliness when the pavement of the stylobate spread warm to the sun and the husky lichens crackled to

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a touch and in the chinks wrought by time and weather small herbs made aromatic the air. Only a few weeks before Waterlow had driven out here and dreamed a day dream, watching the lizards and the wild bees and at the headland's base deliberate fishermen with a net about their business. He had sat with his back to one of the great fluted columns and marked where high up in a rift of the architrave a clump of yellow toad-flax fluttered against the azure, and how a bronze butterfly, whose name he did not know, went coveting the honey, but was ever cheated of it by the brisk May breeze. At the end of this idle day he had gone back to work again among his stuffy draperies with a conviction that for the first time since he arrived out here he had added something of value to the store of his memories, and that in durable riches this solitary, idle day exceeded the sum of all those other days when so often he would have worked hard from nine in the morning until long after midnight. Yet, though it had seemed such an idle day, with nothing except spiritual profit for the mind to justify its idleness, it served a practical purpose, for besides watching butterflies and bees and lizards, besides rebuilding in fancy this sun-dyed ancient fane, Waterlow had wandered along the beach and made himself familiar with the lie of the surrounding country. The hotel, for that was what the owner liked to call it, was a single-storied erection built at the edge of some level land above the shore. Several private rooms and a large gaunt central dining-room opened on a wooden balcony from which steps led down to the beach. This balcony ran right round the building, roofed on the sunny landward side and overlooking a spacious paved terrace round which vines were trained upon a rough

trellis to cast a dappled shade. The whole building was bleached by sun and wind to the fancy of a big empty shell. The kitchens and living quarters of the owner and his family were in an old-fashioned farm-house separate from this barrack and standing in a large walled-in courtyard, with space for twenty automobiles, to which the road gave direct access through a wide gateway. Dense woods of the maritime pine, the fallen needles of which deadened the sound of traffic, extended half a mile inland behind the hotel on either side of the road.

It was in the shadow of these pines that Waterlow and the two giant brothers waited to-night, while Stavro stole forward to reconnoitre. The boy came back presently to say that there was an empty automobile in the courtyard, and that a man was sitting on a heap of sacks in the entrance of the kitchen fast asleep. He had seen him against the glow of the fire. On the terrace was a table with the remains of food and drink and two empty chairs.

"You didn't see the chauffeur?"

Stavro clicked his tongue in a negative.

"I wonder where he is," Waterlow muttered. He stepped out from the shadow of the pines and looked at his watch in the moonlight. It was drawing near three o'clock.

"And you heard no sound from the sea?"

Stavro clicked his tongue again.

"Well, we must risk the chauffeur's being about. The first thing is to secure the man in the kitchen. It's probably the proprietor himself."

They walked quietly along to the gateway of the courtyard, in a corner of which the open door of the kitchen diffused a dull rufous stain upon the brilliant silver air.

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From where they were standing they could see the stout profile of the owner, his chin sunk in sleep. Waterlow turned to the brothers and explained in pantomime what they were to do.

"You didn't see a dog?" Waterlow whispered to Stavro.

He clicked his tongue.

The two giants crept gently round the courtyard toward the open door, seeming as they moved along against the wall like the animated heroic figures of a frieze. At first they were in a grey penumbra, but when they turned the moon flung their jet-black shadows before them, and in Spiro's hand something glittered. Waterlow hoped uneasily that he had made it quite clear they were not to go beyond a threat with the knife. Fellows like Spiro were apt to get so confoundedly enthusiastic on occasions like this. Vassili had reached the doorway. He had clapped his great hand over the sleeping man's mouth and picked him up as though he were no heavier than one of the empty sacks on which he was reposing. Spiro was behind, gently prodding him with the knife.

"Wait here by the gate and let me know if you hear anything," Waterlow told Stavro. Then he walked quickly across the bright courtyard into the kitchen, from which the giants had carried the innkeeper beyond into a large vaulted storehouse that smelt strongly of fish. Vassili deposited him on a barrel, and Spiro stood beside him with the point of the knife against his ribs.

"Now nothing is going to happen to you," said Waterlow, whose fluency in the language would have astonished some of his people at Number Ten. "Nothing at all if you keep quiet and tell me the whole truth. If

not——” He looked at Spiro, who grinned and pricked the captive suggestively with his knife.

The proprietor declared that throughout his life he had always spoken the truth and that not for all the wealth in the world would he attempt the least deception now.

“Good,” said Waterlow. “Well, then, who came here to-night in that empty automobile waiting in the courtyard?”

“A lady and a gentleman.”

“Where’s the chauffeur?”

“There is no chauffeur. They have come without a chauffeur.”

Waterlow looked at Spiro, who tickled the innkeeper’s ribs again. He crossed himself and offered his soul to the Evil One if he was not speaking the truth.

The German had good nerves, Waterlow thought, to drive alone. Odd, though, that Milton should have omitted to notice that von Rangel was at the wheel himself. He was not usually so unobservant, but of course he had been in one of his funks. Perhaps this fellow was lying. Well, if he was, he could be dealt with later. There was no time to waste in cross-questioning. And there did not seem much point in telling a lie about the chauffeur.

“Where are this lady and gentleman now?”

They were in the first room that looked out on the sea as you reached the hotel from here. The first door was the room that looked on the terrace; the second door alongside the balcony was theirs.

When the innkeeper had been gagged and tied up, Waterlow went over with Spiro and Vassili to the enclosed terrace and gazed at that blanched shell of a building

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in the moonlight whose silver was beginning to dim, for the moon herself, much larger now and mellow as ivory, had westered fast. Dawn was close at hand. He bade them in a whisper mark well the door of the room in which was their man. They then went quietly round to the marine front of the hotel. It stared blankly with its dark windows at the placid sea that broke in gentle sighs along the crescent of the beach. The clustered columns on the headland made the idea of a submarine as ludicrous as if through a landscape of Giorgione should drive a railway train. And yet above the sighing of the sea, above the rôle of the shingle, was that not the patient sound of rowlocks drawing nearer to the shore? Waterlow gripped the arms of his companions and listened more intently. It must have been fancy. That sound of distant rowlocks over a calm nocturnal sea, which even at home in peace conveys a mysterious excitement beyond almost any, was no longer audible. Perhaps the boat, if boat it was, had pulled in behind the headland, which would intercept the sound. And even if it was a boat, it might only be a fishing-boat at its lawful business. Still, there was no time to lose. Between those columns the sky would soon be grey.

Waterlow explained to the brothers his plan. They were to stand on each side of the door that opened on the balcony. He himself was going to break into the room through the french-window on the marine side. If the German fired, they were to break in and disarm him. But Waterlow did not anticipate his having time to do that. He expected to carry through without help his part of the business, which was to drive the German out of the room on to the balcony. As soon as he opened the

door they were to seize him and carry him off at full-speed into the pine-wood at the back and tie him up. There one was to remain with him and the other was to come back at once with any papers he might have in his pockets or any bag that he was carrying. On no account were they to use any more violence than was necessary to drag him out of the way. No knives mind. Did they understand? They understood perfectly. Waterlow went back with them to see that they knew which door they had to cover, and he thought with a smile that Samson himself emerging would have a tough job to escape from the clutches of those two giants. Then he fetched Stavro from the gate of the courtyard and told him to walk along the path above the beach and listen for the sound of oars. The moment he was sure of hearing that sound he was to run back and give the alarm. After giving Stavro his orders, he went round again to the marine side of the hotel and saw to his dismay that the french-window of the last room along the balcony was open and the electric light shining yellow on the bleached wood. He drew back out of sight and reconsidered his plan. Ridiculous that the opening of a pair of french-windows should be able to shake one's self-confidence like this. What a fool he had been not to ask the proprietor if there was anybody else staying at Miramara to-night. Perhaps he had better go back to the kitchen and make enquiries. Ah, what was that? He ran round the side of the building in time to see Spiro and Vassili carry a struggling figure with a coat over its head toward the obscurity of the pine-wood. Laughing inwardly with suppressed excitement, he moved cautiously back along the balcony to peep round the

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corner of the building and see if the noise of the scuffle had disturbed the room at the other end. The french-windows were still open; but the electric light had been turned off. He listened again for that far-off click of rowlocks, but heard nothing. It must have been his imagination. Then he pinched himself. 'Wake up, you damned fool. You've got the German officer. He's not a spook. And there *will* be a submarine.' 'Not necessarily,' the argument went on inside. 'You may have von Rangel, but all you've probably interrupted is a brief honeymoon. He probably came out just now to get the car and drive back to town before it gets too light. I believe all this spying has turned Keats's brain. I believe this is just one more mare's-nest.' Rowlocks! In this mood, he should be hearing the wings of angels before the sun was up. Ah, there was one of the brothers. He walked across the terrace to meet him.

"We have found only this envelope, Capitaine," said Spiro.

A large square envelope heavily sealed and addressed to their Minister in Berlin. This was probably the King's letter. Von Rangel must have left his own stuff in the room. Waterlow looked back over his shoulder. There was a light showing under the door.

"All right," he said to Spiro, "you'd better go back now and stand by your prisoner. If you hear voices on the beach stick to your post. I want to keep the boat's crew guessing where their passenger is, when they land."

And then Waterlow realized that he was giving Spiro these directions because at the back of his mind he was playing with the temptation to try to capture the boat's crew. What a triumph! A breach of neutrality, of

course . . . a little embarrassing . . . but why? What business had the King to make arrangements for a submarine to visit his coast like this? That was not a benevolent neutrality. The Opposition would know how to take advantage of such a scandal. Why, before a week was out, they might have come in on our side. And he would have brought it about. How many would there be in the boat's crew? Not more than three men probably. Perfectly easy to capture them. But would any of them venture as far as the hotel? Would they not expect von Rangel to be on the look-out and come to them?

"You're only just inside the wood with your prisoner?"

Spiro nodded.

"Can you see the beach from where you are?"

No, that was impossible.

It would be useless to put Spiro or Vassili on the beach itself. It was already getting definitely lighter. Still, there ought to be some way of capturing the boat's crew.

"All right, Spiro. Get back. I'll come and fetch you if I want you. Or blow my whistle."

He turned to von Rangel's room. It would be as well to make sure now of the rest of his mail. He tapped at the door.

"It's me, Queenie," he said as he passed quickly in.

Waterlow was by this time keyed up to expect a submarine. His mind was prepared for shocks. But when, instead of Queenie, he beheld Georgie Radcliffe turn away from the mirror at which she was powdering her face, to say with a bitter smile, "I'm afraid you've come to the wrong room," he was incapable of any attempt to hide his discomfiture. He merely stammered fatuously:

"You? Here?"

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"And why not?" she asked. "You can't expect me to know by instinct that you were also going to eat crayfish at Miramara, and watch the sun rise from the Temple, and . . . other things."

She began to laugh.

"You seem to find it amusing," said Waterlow feebly.

"Well, I really can't help laughing at men. Of course, I'd always suspected that this secret service business was nothing but a cover for something else. Well, suspected? 'Knew' would be nearer the mark. Yes, I knew perfectly well you intended to meet that girl of Arthur's to-night—long before Paul Drimys told me. You made it only too painfully clear last night and this evening before dinner."

Waterlow frowned.

"Drimys knew? How did he know?"

"Apparently he heard her asking for you at the Legation. But Paul Drimys is as bad as you are. He has been full of mysteries and important duties to-night."

It was now Waterlow's turn to laugh. He was thinking of that struggling figure enveloped in a coat. Evidently Georgie did not know what an outrage had been committed upon her escort.

"I'm afraid I shall have to go and apologize to poor Drimys."

"Oh, I shouldn't bother to do that," she retorted with that bitter sweet smile of hers. "I don't think he's likely to feel jealous of you now."

"Who's in the end room?" Waterlow asked abruptly.

"In the end room?" she echoed. "I don't think there's anybody in the end room or, indeed, anywhere in the restaurant. Sad for you that the fair Queenie couldn't

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keep her assignation. They were having military manoeuvres or something, and no cars were allowed to pass to Miramara to-night. Your informers must have got up late to-day."

"I passed," said Waterlow curtly. "And there *is* somebody in that end room."

She frowned.

"I shall have to speak severely to Master Paul. He told me we were alone here, and that nobody could possibly interrupt us. Of course, I don't count you, because you're . . . Oh, dear, I know there's a lovely long word to describe what you are . . . but I mean everywhere."

The astonishing shamelessness of her, he thought. It did not seem to affect her at all that he should have caught her out in this fashion. She was no more perturbed now than she was this evening when he had arrived early and found her sitting with Drimys in that hotel room she had transfigured with her own personality to the simulation of a home.

"Of course, what you really are, Roger, is a hopeless prig."

"Why do you say that suddenly?"

"Ask your own thoughts."

He was confused for a moment and showed it. That hard little laugh tinkled like a bell rung contemptuously to have him shown out.

"You see, the difference between you and me, Roger, is that you think secret service something apart from ordinary life, whereas I know perfectly well that all life is secret service."

"Secret!" he scoffed.

"Oh, I know you're shocked because I can't blush.

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But why should I? Except for the accident that you'd just met a woman who attracted you more than I, you might be sitting on that sofa watching me powder my face with that comfortable masculine feeling of ownership instead of standing there like an embarrassed curate. However, I should really be greatly obliged if you'd retire before Paul Drimys comes back, because he's one of those perfectly ordinary men who might find it difficult to imagine that you'd merely made a mistake in the lady you were calling upon."

"You needn't worry about Drimys," said Waterlow. "He's quite well occupied. I shall be seeing him in a minute. Shall I give him any message?"

Again that tinkling laugh.

"You might remind him I should like to get home before too many people are about."

"Oh, you would mind if there were a public scandal?" he asked.

"Yes, I think I should, rather."

He felt the big envelope crackling inside his breast-pocket. And he was thinking that if no submarine appeared, and if von Rangel had by chance already gone, and if Queenie were at this moment perhaps waiting for another visit from Arthur in the Pension Bonbon, the only way to avoid such a public scandal would be for him to return this envelope to the trussed-up A.D.C.

"And you don't deserve it," he said grimly.

Then turning away from her in disgust, he walked out of the room and down the steps on to the terrace. Even in the short time he had been with Georgie the air was bloomed with grey and the short-lived summer moon had now no more than a gloss like paper in this twilight

of dawn. The next thing was to get hold of the proprietor and find out who was in that end room. As he came round the corner of the wall to reach the gate of the courtyard, a tall figure barred his path.

"Arthur!"

"You didn't expect to see me here," a strained voice challenged.

"I certainly did not. Have you just come?"

"Yes, I left my car farther back along the road."

"Weren't you stopped on the way?"

"No, I wasn't," replied the young man, his white face drawn, a kind of weary hatred in his eyes, the pupils of which were still expanded by night so that they seemed much larger and darker than usual in this dusky monotone. "I'm afraid your arrangements must have miscarried."

This place was turning into the scene of a French farce, Waterlow thought. Had this infernal young fool come here to try to catch him out with his wife? Something was the matter with him."

"I made no arrangements," he said coldly. "But there were police guarding the road about six miles back."

"I saw no police," said Arthur angrily. "Do you think I'm a liar?"

"You seem very excited, my lad. Does Georgie know you intended to drive all over the country to-night?"

"Georgie went for a motor-drive with some friends after the reception was over."

"And you're going to meet her here, eh?" Waterlow asked.

He could not help a note of relief. It really would

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have been a little too tiresome to be suspected of an assignation with Georgie. He was on the point of saying that perhaps she might have arrived already, when Arthur broke in :

"I don't know where Georgie went."

"Oh, you don't know?"

"We'll leave Georgie out of this, if you don't mind. You know who I'm looking for?"

"I haven't the remotest idea."

"You're a liar!"

Waterlow managed to keep his arm by his side.

"Look here, my lad, don't call me that twice," he said quietly.

"You know as well as I do, that I'm looking for Queenie."

So that was it. But what on earth had led him to come and look for her here?

"We'd better join forces, Arthur. Because I happen to be looking for Queenie myself . . . or rather for Queenie's companion."

On him the blame. Useless to spare him. He should have it between the eyes in another moment. The neurotic young weakling. . . .

"Queenie's companion?" Arthur echoed. "We needn't look very far for him."

"No, I hope not. But we shall have to go and prod the proprietor of this Hotel Metropole. We had to truss him up. He's over there in his kitchen."

"I daresay he is," Arthur sneered. "But who's in the room you came out of just now?"

"You won't find Queenie in there."

"Shan't I. Well, I'll go and look for myself."

He made a step forward; but Waterlow put out an iron-wristed hand and pushed him back.

"I've already assured you that Queenie is not in that room. I told you just now not to call me a liar again."

"I'm going to look for myself," Arthur half-sobbed like a thwarted, angry boy.

"No, my dear fellow, you are not going to look for yourself. You are going to accept my word that Queenie is not in that room. I don't know what malicious fool's tittle-tattle brought you out here to-night. And I'm not in the mood at present to find out. It happens, however, that I have serious work on hand, in which Queenie has been of some service."

"I can easily believe that."

"I'm obliged to you," said Waterlow, bowing ironically. "At the moment I am not quite sure whether she has arrived at the Hotel Metropole, and as to-night she is under my orders we'll come along as I suggested and interview the proprietor."

"Under your orders?" Arthur repeated. "A request to help her with a passport doesn't put her under your orders."

"She agreed to do something for me to-night in return for which I promised to help her over the passport."

"What work can Queenie do? My god, Waterlow, why do you think that you can make a fool of me to such a point? I suppose, from your point of view, you considered yourself entitled to amuse yourself with Queenie. But I think you're a cad, because after all I did admit that I loved her, I gave . . ."

"Hark!" Waterlow interrupted fiercely. "Did you hear somebody calling down by the beach?"

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"You can't put me off with these melodramatic asides," Arthur shouted wildly. "I'm going to see who is in that room."

"Oh, go and see who's in hell," Waterlow snarled, as he ran to the other end of the inn. Along the rising breeze of dawn he heard the voice of Stavro call in shrill excitement:

"Capitaine, my Capitaine!"

As he reached the end of the balcony on the landward side there was a grinding crunch of rapid footsteps upon the shingle. Without waiting to try the door he vaulted over the wooden railing at the end of the balcony, which rotten with sun and rain crumpled under his weight so that he fell with a smash on the other side and, rising to follow in pursuit of the tall figure half-way down the beach, found that his ankle was turned. Yet even so he managed with a skip and a hobble to reach the end of a large fishing-net spread out to dry and to jerk it so that the man plunging down the beach tripped up and sprawled; but that was the end of his effort.

"Stavro! Stavro!" he cried desperately to the boy, who was running towards him along the beach, while a small boat was pulling rapidly in toward the prostrate figure in the net. Waterlow blew his whistle in the hope that Spiro and Vassili might reach the German before the boat was near enough in shore to take him on board. Then he looked seaward for a sight of the submarine, for a sight of one of those leviathans which all these months had haunted his dreams, which all these months had been reported here and there around these myth-making shores. No sign of the sea-monster anywhere. A well of hope gushed in his heart. Could it have sighted a destroyer

and submerged? He strained his vision across the smooth grey sea. Or was the leviathan round the headland over there? Stavro was still running toward the German; who had picked himself up and was plunging down to the boat again. There was a shot, and the boy fell; another shot, and a piece of shingle struck his own chin. Behind him thundered the giant brothers charging through the scrub. A bullet whined overhead, and another, and another. They were trying to drop Spiro and Vassili, whose feet were now grating the shingle. "Run, run!" he shouted. Was that poor little devil dead? "Run! Run!"

And then the German played on them the trick which had been played on him. He jerked the net, and the giants fell like two trees. When they were on their feet again, Major Ernst von Rangel was in the boat.

"So that's that," Waterlow commented, holding his ankle.

He bade the brothers hurry over to Stavro. There was no more to be done with the boat, which was pulling rapidly toward the easterly headland. 'Those glimmering columns up there were looking down at the submarine itself. The ghosts of dead worshippers would be shivering to behold a sign of the old sea-god's power. A subject for Turner! Dawn breaking over the Temple of Poseidon and a submarine below! If he could only paint!

Spiro came along to say that it was a flesh wound in the boy's thigh. Plenty of blood, but nothing serious. They had bound it up.

"All right. Carry him in and put him on a sofa in one of the empty rooms. And then come and help me round to the balcony."

Waterlow's one idea now was to get rid of every-

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body except his own people ; and when presently Arthur Radcliffe came along to apologize, he told him so.

" I really am most awfully sorry," the young man said. " And as a matter of fact I have to apologize for something else. To-night . . . last night, I mean . . . for it's genuinely another day now, isn't it? "

The sea glistened with lilac fire ; behind the columns on the headland dawn, a cold rose, was opening ; and round its darker base the German boat was passing out of sight. Waterlow looked bleakly for a moment at the emptiness before he turned back to Arthur.

" You were saying? "

" I was going to tell you that last night Queenie came to the Legation and gave me a message for you, which I didn't deliver. My only excuse is that from the way she gave it I thought it was merely a message to say she would meet you somewhere. She would not give the name of the place. She said she did not know it, and that made me suspicious. She said it was a restaurant by the sea, and of course I guessed this place, and thought she was trying to get out of it by pretending she did not know the name. But, anyway, I don't want to make excuses, because I realize that there isn't any excuse for my behaviour."

" I suppose Queenie's in that room if you want to see her," said Waterlow. He nodded in the direction of the last room through whose open windows von Rangel had plunged down upon the beach.

" She was with the German? "

" Don't forget I asked you yesterday which I was supposed to be helping more over the passport—her or you."

"Yes, I remember, and I said you would be helping her more than me."

"And I told you I had my reasons for asking that question. I don't propose to try to justify what I did, because from a sentimental point of view, which is probably the only one that would appeal to you, there is no justification. The girl, however, as I suspected, *is* a German; but for reasons which I can understand, she has conceived a violent hatred against Germany. I don't know how much she has told you of her past."

"A good deal."

"Did she tell you about the funeral of her adopted sister in Constantinople? Ah, she did? Well, then perhaps you can understand better why I should have thought it reasonable to prove her sincerity in this particular way. It no doubt shocks your fastidiousness. You can still allow yourself the luxury of fastidiousness. I can't in the job I have taken on."

"Is your ankle very painful?" Arthur enquired anxiously, for Waterlow had winced.

"No, no, my ankle's all right," he replied coldly. "I'm merely bored with all you people about the place. You'd better go and see Queenie."

"No, I don't think I'll do that."

Waterlow noticed that Arthur's lip was quivering.

"Afraid of Georgie?" he asked, raising his eyebrows.

"Afraid of myself, I think," Arthur replied. Then the young man braced himself. "I've got to cut her out of my life, and she knows that. It was only the jealousy that came over me when I thought she was turning so easily to you for a protector. No, I won't ever see her again. That's a promise. I've made a big enough fool

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of myself. She's in your hands now, and I know you'll do all you can for her. And now do you mind if Georgie speaks to you for a minute? I think she wants to apologize too."

"Oh, please," the older man protested. "If *she* apologizes I shall think so much less of her. And there really isn't any need. The whole affair is a wash-out. I've lost the submarine. I've lost the German mail. . . ."

"Through our fault."

"No, I can't blame anybody but myself; and I'm not sure that I can blame myself very much. Things just went wrong. By the way, I have here what is probably a letter from the King to the Kaiser. Don't blench, Arthur; I'm not going to embarrass your diplomatic immunity. But I thought perhaps that Georgie might like to hand it back to her host. He's sitting up there in the wood. Have you got a penknife on you?"

"Yes, why? You're not going to open that envelope?"

The deeper emotion he had been showing was swallowed up in official nervousness. Waterlow laughed.

"No, no, no. But you'll find it useful when you hand this letter back to Captain Paul Drimys. Oh, and there is one thing more you can do for me, Arthur."

"Anything," the young man cried eagerly.

"It's nothing that will strain your goodwill or affect your promotion," Waterlow said. "I merely want you to ring up Crowder—Scrutton has the number—and tell him to come along here with my car as soon as he can, and bring a doctor with a dressing for a wound in a boy's leg."

"I can leave you my car. Georgie and I could drive back with Drimys."

"Thanks, Arthur, but I somehow feel that Captain Drimys will prefer to drive back by himself. You'll understand why when you see him. And now do go away. I'm tired to death of all you social butterflies. I want to talk to some of my humble friends. Here take this damned envelope."

"I'm afraid you're feeling this disappointment rather," said the young man, holding the sealed envelope as if it might explode.

"Run along, Arthur," Waterlow murmured. And Arthur retired gloomily. Three or four minutes later his wife came along the balcony with the envelope.

"Look here, Roger. What's the idea in giving this to Paul Drimys?"

"Because I took it away from him."

"Then why give it back?"

"Because, the main objective not being achieved, this envelope has become an untenable salient. To attempt to hold on to it would involve too much loss of reputation."

"You mean that my reputation will suffer?"

"Well, I don't know that I should bother very much about that," he replied, with a pleasant smile of mockery.

"Like the lizard who sheds his tail in a panic, I'm sure you would soon grow another."

"Then Arthur's?"

"Arthur's reputation would certainly suffer. In fact, I think it would mean sounding the Last Post for Arthur. But, and you must forgive my insensitiveness, I'm not really tremendously interested in preserving either of you."

"I don't think you need be so sarcastic."

"I was remembering the fashionable wail of the

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moment—the sacrifice of youth in this war. Perhaps because I am myself over forty, I feel just as strongly about the sacrifice of age ; and the reputation I am thinking about is Sir Frederic's. So when you've untied your friend Captain Drimys and given him time to recover his breath and express some of his indignation, console him with this."

"He'll probably want you to fight a duel."

"Even if he should consider that his own dignity would not suffer by inviting a bounder like myself to give him satisfaction, I could not, in my position, take advantage of his condescension. So, not being able to fight and being unwilling to obtrude myself upon him in his present rather undignified position, I am relying on you and Arthur to soothe his vanity with that envelope."

"You're not doing this on my account?" Georgie pressed.

"I'm afraid I must be honest and say, 'no.'"

"Because Arthur and I have agreed that we've made such asses of ourselves that we'd rather not get out of the consequences at your expense."

"Well, if you and Arthur have agreed about even such a humble person as myself that compensates for the fiasco of the night. It is in its way a minor triumph."

"I suppose you'll go on being damned sarcastic with me now for the rest of time."

"Look here, while we're chatting together your wretched cavalier (or should one be modern and say chauffeur?) is getting stiff in the comparative coolness of dawn. And, as I told Arthur just now, I *am* getting so tired of you fashionable folk, and I do so much want to be left alone."

She tried a last throw to reinstate herself.

"Can I go and tell this girl Queenie I think she's been a sport?"

He shook his head.

"Queenie would never appreciate that fine instinct which is called *noblesse oblige*. I think if you really want to be considerate you'll leave her alone—and me——"

"You hate me, don't you?"

"Not a bit."

"Just bored with me?"

"Well, frankly, I shall be very soon. The kindest thing you can do, Georgie, is to cheer up Drimys."

She hung back even yet for a moment or two; but he was staring out across the sea so empty and so placid under that frail faint blue of the morning sky. She turned quickly and left him alone.

Presently Waterlow called to Spiro.

"How's Stavro?"

"It hurts him, and he is groaning a little; but I do not think it is serious, Capitaine."

"You'd better go and untie the proprietor. Tell him to get coffee for everybody as quickly as possible."

Spiro bowed and prepared to retire.

"Oh and, Spiro, I forgot to ask. Was the gentleman you tied up in the wood wearing uniform?"

Spiro shook his head.

"Did he have a pistol?"

Spiro nodded.

"Well, give it back to him."

"It was Vassili who took his pistol, Capitaine."

"Then go and get it from Vassili. What did you take?"

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"Only his watch, Capitaine."

"Well, give that back to him. Did he have any money?"

"Vassili took that, Capitaine."

"Well, give him back at once everything you both took. He's not a German, you know. Did you take anything from the man who owns the place?"

"There was nothing we could take, Capitaine."

With a bow Spiro retired.

"Send Vassili to me when you've got the gentleman's pistol and money," Waterlow called after him. "And, Spiro, you'd better start the gentleman's car for him. His wrist may be stiff."

Presently the other giant came round to where Waterlow was sitting on the balcony, and bowed gravely.

"Help me up, Vassili. I want to go and see Stavro."

The boy was lying on a sofa in one of the empty supper-rooms. Loss of blood had made him pale, and his face was now the colour of bleached chestnut-wood. He smiled when his chief limped in and, sitting at the foot of the couch, took his hand. It was not one of those subtle smiles of some old master's canvas, but a broad grin of boyish gratification at having had his leg torn by a bullet. To have stabbed three policemen and been shot himself in the space of a few hours had taken him as near to the top of this green world as he was ever likely to reach.

"You are also wounded, my Capitaine?" the boy asked eagerly.

"No, I've only sprained my ankle."

"Ah, that is bad. It is a thing that can happen to anybody."

He felt profoundly sympathetic with what must be the chief's disappointment over so commonplace a mishap.

"Well, let this be a lesson not to stab policemen," said Waterlow.

"Ah, yes, but they have tried to take that beautiful lady."

And Waterlow realized that in the excitement of the night he had not yet heard Stavro's account of the affray.

"Well," he said, when the boy had finished. "I suppose I can't blame you. And so you and the lady made friends, eh?"

The boy kissed his hand to the ceiling.

"Good! Very good! Very sweet! Very kind!" he ejaculated.

It struck Waterlow that just the way to make Queenie forget about other things would be to interest her in Stavro's wound. This miniature knight-errant would be the very companion for her present mood. And then suddenly he realized that they had all presumed the presence of Queenie at Miramara, but that she might not be here at all. The German might have sent her back in his car. She might be now lying miserably in her room at the Pension Bonbon. If she were here, she would surely have run out in terror when the shots were fired. He jumped up and sat down again with a cry of pain.

"Ah, that is not good, my Capitaine," said Stavro severely. Lying there in his shirt and bare bandaged leg, he was conscious of being a much better behaved invalid than his chief.

"Help me along to the door at the other end of the balcony," Waterlow told Vassili.

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The great golden sun was glancing up through the columns of the temple ; the bird-shell sky of dawn was turning to the soft velvet of a summer's morning. Long tenuous shadows were outflung everywhere. Clustered sea-birds were glittering on the beach. Back in the courtyard the engines of the cars clattered in noisy preparation to be gone. Followed a whirr of wheels that gradually died away to an exquisite morning stillness, and on the limpid air stole the perfume of roasting coffee.

Was Queenie in that stale Pension or here at Miramara? He tapped on the door. There was no response. He opened it and saw her lying huddled on the couch. Horror seized him that von Rangel, supposing treachery, had paid his account.

"Queenie!" he cried in agony.

She turned slowly, and with white face and eyes which still held the darkness of the night in their deeps she looked at him woefully.

"I was trying to make him stay, but he must always be going," she sighed.

"Queenie, I want you to come and talk to a friend of yours."

"Not to Arthur," she shuddered. "No, please, I am not wanting to talk to him now. He is never again for me to love. He has told me himself how he cannot love me, and I think for me to love him would be so silly. Oh, yes, I would love him if he could be with me always. But how must I love some person who is not at all there? It is very difficult, I find."

"Well, we'll forget all about Arthur," Waterlow said, and he was not quite able to keep the satisfaction out of his voice. "Do you remember Stavro last night?"

"That little boy who was very kind to me?"

"Yes, he was shot by . . . he was shot just now, and I want you to come and cheer him up."

"He was shot by that . . . that man?"

"Yes."

"But that is quite abominable," Queenie exploded, sitting up indignantly. "To shoot a poor little boy like Stavro. I find that is terrible."

She jumped up and ran out on the balcony, then looking round and seeing with what difficulty Waterlow was following her she came back.

"And you have been wounded also, yes?" she asked.

"No, no, mine's only a sprained ankle."

"*Ach*, but that is hurting very much. *Ach*, yes, I know, because I have made so with my ankle once long ago in Palermo, because the stage was so bad. I will bathe it for you with cold water, yes?"

He shook his head with a smile.

"No, no, you go and cheer up Stavro. I must see about one or two things and then we'll have breakfast together, and have a talk about your passport."

"I will not be having it now?" she asked wistfully.

"Because you have not found that German man?"

"Yes, you will be having it, Queenie. You have done all you could."

"But see, I have pushed his valise away, and he has left it behind."

She stooped and pulled from beneath the sofa von Rangel's suit-case.

Waterlow's heart leaped. Perhaps after all it was going to be a coup. She left him sitting down on the floor beside it like a child with a new toy. Ah, here was

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the famous ready-made suit bought for sixty francs. Shirts, ties, collars, brushes, sponge-bag, boots, another suit, hair-wash . . . but no papers. Poor devil, Waterlow thought. How confoundedly uncomfortable he would be without his luggage. Of course, they would never have him from here unless they were going straight back to their base. There might be a spare toothbrush in the submarine; but probably he would not get one before Pola. Absurd, no doubt, to worry over an enemy's temporary discomfort; but after all he might just as well have had his suit-case. When that Austrian submarine kidnapped those British officers from a steamer in the Ionian, they had been given time to pack their luggage. Gentlemanly fellows, the Austrians. One would have liked to show as much courtesy in return. He put the things back in the suit-case and shouted for Spiro.

"I don't want anything taken out of this," he said severely. "And you will be held responsible if anything is missing when I go through the contents again."

Spiro bowed.

"I have water ready for you, Capitaine."

He let the giant help him along to make a kind of a toilet and bathe his ankle which was badly swollen, but hurting less.

"I don't think I can get my boot on again," he said.

"No, no," Spiro agreed, "it would not be good." He wrapped the foot up in silk bandages he had obtained from the proprietor's wife, produced two sticks, and led the way to the coffee which had been laid on the terrace. As he passed the room where Queenie was talking to the wounded boy, he looked in to call her to join him.

"I was telling to Stavro that I have *eine narbe* on my leg where he will have one too," she announced enthusiastically.

It was the first time she had used a German word in his hearing, and he took it as an omen that she had lost some of her fear.

"He won't have nearly such a big one as you, Queenie."

She chattered away all through breakfast, and it was a relief to be able to listen idly to the snatches of scenes she evoked from her past, to listen idly as one might listen to the cheeping of birds in a garden without having to construct out of such cheeping a case for the files, a record for the card index, without having to compress such information into a telegram or warn the world of the danger of this solitary small spark amid a mundane conflagration. He wished that his ankle would allow him to climb up the headland and sit among those columns in the morning sunlight, listening idly to these tales of Queenie's past. He wondered if the V.A. had received his telegram. No doubt, they were tired by now of false alarms. They would have grown as sceptical up at Mudros as he had down here. One could not blame them. Still, a trawler might put in here, and it would be a mild satisfaction to tell the skipper that if he had arrived sooner he might have had a pleasant little bounty for dropping a depth-charge on an enemy submarine. Von Rangel wouldn't have missed his suit-case then. Horrible way to die! In thinking how stupid war was one forgot what a damned wicked thing it was too. Odd the way men should behave like this, and then put the blame on God. Odd, too, that men should have so much physical

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courage, and yet morally be such cowards. The fortune of war had so far given him nothing to reproach himself with, except his treatment of this girl babbling away beside him about the shifting tawdry scenes of her past, which yet when reconjured by her were softened by a wistful beauty. Nothing but this slim golden girl on his conscience? Yet that was enough, when one stopped to think what it meant to violate a girl's personality as he had deliberately done and then cold-bloodedly planned to send a lot of human beings to a horrible death as the result of the outrage. How had he dared to feel seriously perturbed on account of the inconvenience he had caused a fellow-creature by making him lose a suit-case, and not gone down on his knees to thank God that his death was not upon his conscience? Yet had the submarine been destroyed he would have felt nothing except a mad elation. The fellows from the trawler, or drifter, or destroyer, or sloop, or M.L., would have come ashore, and they would have told the proprietor to open his best wine and they would have sat here clinking glasses with one another to celebrate the death of their enemies. The picture of them sitting on this terrace cleared his imagination of morbid sentiment. He sent Vassili to climb to the top of the headland and keep a look-out for the White Ensign. Should any ship come within hailing distance of Miramara they would all gather on the beach and signal to her like wrecked mariners.

"And now, Queenie, what about your future?"

She waited anxiously.

"First of all, what about money?"

"*Ach*, he has paid me very well."

Waterlow was on the verge of saying that the services

she had rendered would be rewarded sufficiently to make it unnecessary for her to keep that money. Then it struck him how absurd it was to differentiate between the twin obligations incurred by von Rangel and the British Government.

"Well, that's your affair," he said. "We shall pay your expenses to England. But what are you going to do when you get there?"

"Oh, I will have Elsie's mother who will be my mother, and perhaps I will be dancing again in that club," she answered confidently.

"No, you won't be able to do that, Queenie. Your history would soon leak out. Somebody might at any moment see you and recognize you."

"Zozo, perhaps?" she exclaimed in alarm.

"No, I don't think you'll run up against him in England. At any rate, not where I want you to go. But, Queenie, you've got to give up the idea of leading the kind of life you've been leading all these years if you go to England. If you go on as you're going now, it could only end in trouble. Either you'll fall into the hands of Zozo . . ."

"No, no!"

"Or of somebody like Zozo. Even if you didn't, the police would be certain sooner or later to start enquiring into your antecedents, about what you were and why you came to England. And, then, if they found out all about you, not only might they turn you out of England, but it would also get me into trouble. So, frankly, I'd rather you didn't go and see Elsie's mother, because I'm afraid she might talk. Still, I don't want to make it too difficult for you, and so I won't absolutely forbid that.

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But I want you to go to somebody else first. I want you to go to my mother."

"To your mother?" she repeated in astonishment. "*Ach*, but I do not think that she would at all like to be seeing me."

"Yes, she would, when she reads the letter I shall send her about you. I had a letter from her the day before yesterday, and I've been thinking what a very old lady she is now, and how nice it would be for her to have somebody like you in her little house. I don't suppose you've ever been in the country, have you?"

"Oh, yes," she said importantly. "I was in the country for a week with such a nice boy. He was very *chic*. He had shoes that were so *chic*—all black and white. He was from Marseilles, and we were in the country for a week."

"Yes, well, I'm afraid there won't be any *chic* boys down at Galton where my mother lives, and even if there were, you wouldn't be able to go about with them. And that's the trouble, Queenie. You remember you said to me yesterday afternoon that if Arthur gave you an apartment you wouldn't like it? You thought you'd be dull, even if you had a nice little dog to keep you company. And then, you remember, I suggested giving you an apartment myself? And you didn't like that idea, because I was English. Have you forgotten what you said to me?"

"No, no, I am not forgetting."

"Well, I want you to feel like that about all the Englishmen you meet in England. That is if you go to England."

"Yes, please, but I must," she interposed.

"I'm going to make it possible for you if you think you can stand it. On the other hand, if you feel you'll be unhappy away from the life you have been leading ever since you were such a little girl, I don't want to persuade you into giving it up. Only it wouldn't be possible to lead that life in England. You know what going on the streets means?"

"Yes, but I am never that kind of a girl," she insisted primly. "No, no, I could not be that kind of a girl."

"I don't think you could. But in England you could only lead the kind of life you're leading now by going on the streets. We don't have places like Mère Bonbon's there. We don't have theatres and cabarets like the Tip Top there. So you see you're going to a very dull old country. And if you're afraid of being dull and unhappy, then I think you'd better stay where you are."

"No, no, because I am afraid of Zozo! I must *not* be staying here. You cannot know how terrible he is. *Ach*, please, you have said I can be English, and now you are wishing not to make for me what you have said."

He leaned across the table and took her hand gently.

"Listen, you strange little golden girl. I'm longing for you to go to England. But I don't want you to go there under a wrong impression."

"Please?"

"I don't want you to think it means just the same wandering life, the same lazy mornings and afternoons, the same bright exciting nights. You'll have to get up in the morning quite early, and you'll have to go to bed

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at night quite early too. You'll only have a very old lady to talk to most of the time, and it will be a funny quiet old town. Nothing to do except look at trees and fields, and a little river running at the bottom of the garden. Nothing to do but pick flowers and arrange them in vases. Why, your greatest excitement will be walking into town and looking at shops with old-fashioned clothes in the windows—oh, I tell you, Queenie, it will be terribly dull. But perhaps if you had a dog . . .”

“Can I have a little dog?” she cried. “Oh, I will be so happy if I can have one little dog.”

“Well, you shall,” he promised. “But I forgot another thing. You'll have to go to church.”

“I like to go to church. I have been to church with Sylvia.” Then her brow clouded. “But where can I put my little dog if I am in church?” she asked woe-fully.

The disposal of the dog during church was decided not without difficulty.

“By the way, you've no idea where that friend of yours is now? Sylvia?” he asked.

“No, I do not know where she can be. She was being so sweet to me, and she was like you, because she did not at all want me to be going with men. She has sold all things she has to keep me from that when we have been without money in Roumanie.”

“Like me?” he repeated. “I'm afraid I haven't done much in that way.”

“*Ach*, you are thinking of the German man. Do not, please, to be thinking of him. He is quite gone away now. If he could come back I would be so sick; but I do not think he can come back. But Zozo can always be

coming back here. And Zozo can always say to me, 'Ah, Tina,' because he would always call me Tina, and he would say, 'Ah, Tina,' and I must be going with him. And how I have been hating that man! You cannot have such an idea how I am hating him. But when he calls me so, I am too much afraid not to go where he is telling me."

"Well, I can promise you that Zozo will never come into my mother's garden and say, 'Ah, Tina.'"

"Please, please, let me go to that sweet garden."

"It's a dangerous experiment," he sighed. "However, you shall have your passport to go to England."

"Will I have a little book with a pink inside?"

He nodded.

"Oh, I am very happy," she cried, clapping her hands. "And now can I tell to Stavro that I will be an English girl in England? He will be so jealous when I tell him that, because he would like so much to be an English boy."

"Remember he's a wounded warrior and don't upset him with idle longings."

"Please? But I think I will show him the *narbe* . . . no, how do you say it?"

"The scar."

"The scar on my leg where Zozo has shooted me with a pistol. I think Stavro is very young. And he would like to see it very much, because he would so much like to have a scar for himself."

She left him on the terrace. The sun had not yet lost his morning blandness. A shepherd was driving his goats and sheep to pasture in the scrub beside the pines. Their multitudinous tinklings grew fainter until presently they

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became a part of the young morning's voice like the hum of the sedulous bees above the flaming blossoms of a gnarled pomegranate against the courtyard wall.

Waterlow took out his notebook and began to scribble in pencil a postscript to the letter he wrote to his mother yesterday:

You asked me what work I am doing. I can only tell you, as I have told you before, that it is called intelligence, and at the moment I am wondering who was the wit that invented that name. You can remain quite at ease about me, for I am not in the least likely to get a ship until the war is over. And now I want you to do something for me, which may be a great bore, but if it is I shall never know, for you're sure to pretend that it isn't! I have come across in the course of my work a girl who is without parents, without home, without friends, even without nationality. She has helped me in my work at great cost to herself, and I am sending her to England, and I want you to have her to live with you at Galton, until I can get home and make other arrangements for her if necessary. She is about twenty, perhaps twenty-four, but she has in some ways the mind of a child of twelve, though she is what is called an actress. You can imagine her future out here unless somebody looks after her. I'm not in love with her in any ordinary sense of the term. But I do love her as one loves a child. I wonder what might have happened ultimately to me if I hadn't had that mother in Hampshire at the back of my mind everywhere. I wonder where I would be by now. Not that I'm anywhere in particular as it is, but still, you can understand, can't you, that a failure and a disappointment like myself

might want to give somebody else a chance? I can't tell you the girl's whole story until I see you. Do forgive me for inflicting her on you. But I know you will, because I know that you'll be sorry for anything or anybody that I am sorry for. Seventy-five, are you? But what a gallant old lady, to be sure . . .

Waterlow broke off. There was a whirr among the pine-woods. The car already? Impossible! Why, Arthur would hardly be back in town yet. Surely he and Georgie had not turned round? He swore. This was to have been a quiet morning. What an infernal nuisance! A horn sounded once, then twice, then three times. That *was* his own car. It must be Crowder. And five minutes later Crowder and Milton, followed by two men he did not recognize, arrived on the terrace.

"Captain Cazenove and Commander Rankin, sir, to see you on very urgent and private business," Crowder announced grandly. "We met Mr Radcliffe on the way, and he explained to us a bit of what happened. If only Milton and I had been with you we might have nobbled that blessed submarine. Cool!"

"We did our best last night, Skipper," said Milton darkly. "We fought 'em to a standstill, didn't we, Mr Crowder? It was La Bassée over again. But they were too many for us. Oh, yes. And as you ordered me not to kill any of 'em . . ."

The agent called Milton broke off to utter an immense, an almost Virgilian sigh for the tears of things.

"The police!" he resumed, shaking his luculent head in pity. "Well, it's a fact I put the fear of hell into them. They were eating out of our hands at their head-

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quarters. The Commandant shook all over when I walked in." He handed Waterlow an envelope. "My report of last night's business, Skipper. That tells you everything. Very hot!" Then he saluted and retired, sniffing the air for a moment and then moving with sombre determination in the direction of the kitchen.

"You didn't bring a doctor?" Waterlow asked Crowder.

"We'd started too soon, sir."

"Oh, well, it's nothing very serious. Young Stavro was shot in the leg. But it's only a flesh wound."

Crowder looked at Captain Cazenove and Commander Rankin. This, he implied, was what might happen here at any moment; and then he too retired to interview the proprietor, who, after his experience with the giants, was trembling with eager hospitality and delighted to serve coffee all round.

"Rather stout fellows those two ruffians of yours," said Captain Cazenove, as he took a seat at the table. "They were telling Rankin and me all about their scrap with the natives last night."

"Some scrap," Commander Rankin observed, taking his seat.

"Did the V.A. get my telegram in time?"

"Don't suppose he did for a moment," said Captain Cazenove, who was a neat little man with a strong chin.

"And if he did," said Commander Rankin, who was of the fleshy type of naval officer that recalls the triumphs of leading tenors in comic opera. "If he did, he wouldn't have done anything about it. He's had three absolutely reliable telegrams in the last two days, and the submarine was one of our M.L.'s every time."

"You'd have had a submarine here not three hours ago," said Waterlow. "They actually landed a boat."

"Don't say any more before we've had breakfast," Captain Cazenove begged. "I shall weep. If I'd only had your signal! We were here at midnight, got into mufti, and drove up from the harbour to find you."

Commander Rankin leaned over and whispered that this was Captain T.

Waterlow eyed with envious respect the man who controlled the movements of trawlers and drifters in these waters.

"But we didn't get hold of your man Crowder till three o'clock, and then only by a happy chance. He came into that big café—the what do you call it—for a drink," Commander Rankin explained.

"And he looked as if he badly wanted one," added Captain Cazenove. "I told him I was looking for you on urgent business, and so after showing us round the gay capital he brought us along here in your car as soon as he thought the road was clear of these natives. Well, the point is this . . ."

The little man with the prominent chin lowered his voice and looked round to see that nobody was within hearing.

"The point is this, Waterlow. The Admiralty have agreed to let us have a Q-ship out here, and we want you to get hold of one for us. Of course, you'll have to step damned carefully. We can't afford to let the wily Boche get an inkling of it. But you secret service fellows know all about that. My idea was a big caique. She could be loaded with a cargo of something or other for Alexandria. You'd want to engage a good native crew. Then up

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with her to our base and we'll take her inside out and fit her with a gun, and give you a good gunner, and . . ."

"Give me a good gunner?" Waterlow interrupted bitterly.

"Yes, we think you are just the man to command her. Of course, you realize that you'll be at sea for six or eight months, perhaps without touching at any port? You'll be cruising all the time between here and Sicily. You'll want to choose your crew carefully. I suppose those two stout fellows who showed us round last night wouldn't be any good at sea? Because if you did have the luck to get a scrap, I should think you'd find them a pretty useful pair. Well, there's a good deal to talk over, but what about it? Do you think you'd like this command?"

"Would I like it?" Waterlow repeated in a daze.

"Because I suppose you'll have to get somebody else to carry on for you here? And we'll have to let them know in London."

"Would I like it, did you say?" Waterlow repeated. "You're not pulling my leg, sir, over that wash-out last night?"

"Why, no, that was just deuced bad luck," said Captain Cazenove.

"Deuced bad luck," echoed Commander Rankin.

Waterlow lost control of his throat.

"I'm awfully sorry to make an ass of myself, sir," he stammered feebly. "I think I must be rather tired or something. But you see this is what I've been . . . you see, I hadn't really thought about anything but this for months now. You see, I'm . . ."

And then tactfully Captain Cazenove turned away from the man in the dingy flannel suit and asked Com-

DAWN

mander Rankin what that blue stuff was growing on the roof over there.

“ I’m afraid I’m no good at flowers, sir.”

“ It’s Morning Glory,” said Waterlow, blinking himself back into control of his tears. “ A kind of big convolvulus.”

NIGHT

as much exposed to danger as those of the combatants. They wanted to impress him. But when he reached Berlin again he should make it pretty clear in certain exalted circles that they were leading a life of luxury down here and did not deserve a moment's consideration. If this country stayed neutral, as by his visit to the King to-morrow he hoped to secure for some time to come, why, the post of military attaché here would not be unenviable. He might try for it himself presently. Next winter, for instance, it would be good to get a little sunshine, and if that pretty little fair girl were still here . . .

Queenie had finished her songs ; and now the orchestra was striking up the music for her dance.

It was not a first-class display. It was the kind of dancing that may be seen in any pantomime on tour. It was the kind of dancing that is called gymnastic. She kicked very high first with one leg and then with the other. She threw her head very far back, displaying her supple form. She pulled up her short fluffy skirts a few inches higher with one hand and went prancing round the stage waving the other. She was too eager and energetic to succeed in being graceful all the time ; but her long slim legs were so attractive, and she gave such an impression of fragile youth and ethereal fairness that every evening when she brought her dance to an end by doing the splits and sustaining with smiles at the audience her final pose she received the biggest ovation of the night. Who was she ? What was she ? Nobody knew. She had been blown here by the north wind. English ? Perhaps. German ? Just as probably. Scandinavian ? That was possible. How long would she stay here ?